the FABRICATION *of* ABORIGINAL HISTORY



VOLUME THREE

THE STOLEN GENERATIONS 1881–2008

KEITH WINDSCHUTTLE

The Fabrication of Aboriginal History

VOLUME THREE

THE STOLEN GENERATIONS

1881–2008

MACLEAY PRESS
Sydney

Copyright © Keith Windschuttle 2009

First published 2009
Macleay Press
PO Box 477
Paddington NSW 2021
Sydney, Australia

All rights reserved. Without limiting the rights under copyright recorded above, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise), without the prior written permission of both the copyright owner and the publisher of this book.

Cover design by Reno Design Group, Sydney
Printed in Australia by Ligare Pty Ltd, Riverwood, New South Wales

National Library of Australia
Cataloguing-in-Publication entry:

Author:	Windschuttle, Keith, 1942–
Title:	The fabrication of Aboriginal history. Vol. 3 : the stolen generations 1881–2008 / Keith Windschuttle.
ISBN:	9781876492199 (hbk.)
Notes:	Includes index. Bibliography.
Subjects:	Stolen generations (Australia) Aboriginal Australians—History. Aboriginal Australians—Treatment of. Children, Aboriginal Australians—History. Aboriginal Australians—Land tenure. Social justice—Australia. Reconciliation.
Dewey Number:	994.60049915

CONTENTS

Preface:	The holes in the rabbit-proof fence	1
Introduction:	Australia's reputation for genocide	13
1:	The invention of the Stolen Generations	42
2:	The evidence of the New South Wales archives	75
3:	The intentions of the policy makers	128
4:	The culture of the camps	197
5:	Life in the institutions	243
6:	The credibility of the stolen children	289
7:	Breeding out the colour	342
8:	The 'totalitarian' regime of A. O. Neville	401
9.	Sex, disease and missionaries in Western Australia	442
10.	Part-Aborigines in the Northern Territory	479
11.	The hollow apologies of Tasmania and Victoria	537
12.	The legal position in South Australia and Queensland	571
13.	How many children were separated from parents?	609
Bibliography		619
Index		636

PREFACE

The holes in the rabbit-proof fence

As you know, every Aborigine born in this state comes under my control. [Shows slide of Aboriginal mother and child.] Notice, if you will, the half-caste child, and there are ever increasing numbers of them. Now, what is to happen to them? Are we to allow the creation of an unwanted third race? Should the coloureds be encouraged to go back to the black or should they be advanced to white status and be absorbed in the white population? Now, time and again I'm asked by some white man, 'If I marry this coloured person will our children be black?', and as Chief Protector of Aborigines it is my responsibility to accept or reject those marriages. [Shows slide with portrait of three family members.] Here is the answer: three generations — half-blood grandmother, quadroon daughter, octoroon grandson. Now, as you can see in the third generation, or third cross, no trace of native origin is apparent. The continuing infiltration of white blood finally stamps out the black colour. The Aboriginal has simply been bred out.

> — Actor Kenneth Branagh speaking from a screenplay by Christine Olsen in the motion picture *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, purportedly representing a speech given by Auber Octavius Neville to a Perth ladies' charity society in 1931[1]

[1] *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, Phil Noyce director, Christine Olsen screenplay, Phil Noyce and Christine Olsen producers, Australian Film Finance Corporation, Premium Movie Partnership, South Australian Film Corporation and Jabal Films, 2002

PHIL Noyce's film *Rabbit-Proof Fence* has probably done more than any other cultural product to cement in the Australian mind the twin notions of the Stolen Generations and 'breeding out the colour', or putting an end to Aboriginality. When released in local cinemas in December 2002 it was the box office success of that summer. Since then it has also proven itself an enduring staple within the education market. Indeed, high school teachers who now try to show *Rabbit-Proof Fence* to Year 12 classes in Australian history receive groans of protest from students who have seen the film several times in various other courses since they first studied it in English in Year 6.[2] If a girl from a private school in Sydney on an exchange visit to a sister institution in the United States is asked to update her new classmates on Australian history, she is likely to act as one did in February 2009 and give a presentation about the Stolen Generations and screen *Rabbit-Proof Fence*.[3]

Teachers of history think this film appropriate because its producers advertise it as 'a true story' and it is based on a book about real people. In this, it is unlike the more recent Australian film, Baz Luhrmann's *Australia*, which incorporates the Stolen Generations story in its plot. *Australia* does not pretend to be anything more than a work of the imagination, a traditional Hollywood-style romance-adventure. *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, however, should also be regarded a work of dramatic fiction. It gets the names of several of the main historical characters and locations right, but not much else.

In particular, the chilling, bureaucratic speech above, which the screenwriter composed to depict the Chief Protector A. O. Neville's motives for taking the Aboriginal girls Molly, Gracie and Daisy from their families, did *not* give the real reason they were taken from Jigalong in remote Western Australia in 1931. While it is true that Neville did subscribe in the 1930s to a theory of 'breeding out the colour', it was not his motive for removing children. As the words of the phrase said, it aimed to control breeding. It was a proposal about fostering the marriage of part-Aboriginal women to white men, but, from the start, it was a hopeless failure. Most part-Aboriginal women preferred to marry men of their own background, and the Chief Protector could not force them to do otherwise. The main point here, however, is that both Noyce's film, and many of the academic historians who have discussed Neville's practices, have connected two

[2] Richard Guilliatt, 'Why Kids Hate Australian History', *Weekend Australian Magazine*, 23–24 February 2008, p 18

[3] Deborah Cassrels, 'Exchange Brings History Home', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21–22 February 2009, Special Report, p 3

distinct notions in a way that is historically inaccurate. 'Breeding out the colour' was not a proposal for the removal of children.

In the 1930s 'breeding out the colour' was seriously discussed at high political levels. In 1933, the issue went all the way to Federal Cabinet for approval, but was not endorsed. Indeed, the responsible Commonwealth minister denounced the proposal in parliament. As Chapter Seven demonstrates, all this discussion was about inter-marriage. None of it made any reference to removing children. The hordes of Australian school students fed this line have been badly misled.

There are other parts of the same speech that attribute to Neville views he either did not hold at the time or never expressed at any time. When Molly, Gracie and Daisy were removed in 1931, Neville did not have the control over the marriage of half-caste Aborigines the script attributed to him. The Native Administration Act only gave him that power in 1936 but, even then, he had no practical means of enforcing it, and missionaries in the north of the state openly defied him. Parts of the speech came from other authors at other times. The phrase 'an unwanted third race' of half-castes was used by a Melbourne journalist writing about Alice Springs in 1927. Another phrase, the 'white blood finally stamps out the black colour', was written by a Perth doctor in 1933. Both these people are mentioned briefly in Pat Jacobs's biography, *Mister Neville*, where the filmmakers obviously found their statements and decided to put them into the mouth of the Chief Protector.[4] They were not quotations from Neville himself.

The film claims to be a version of Doris Pilkington's 1996 book *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence*. Pilkington was one of Molly's two daughters. She wrote her work from the stories told by her mother and Daisy about their escape in August 1931 from the Moore River Settlement north of Perth and their three-month, 1600-kilometre cross-country walk back to their families. Pilkington originally trained as a nurse but later studied journalism at Curtin University, where she obviously learnt some useful research skills.

For her book, Pilkington searched the Western Australian archives and found a number of relevant surviving documents. They allowed her to reconstruct the girls' removal and escape, both from their own perspective and the viewpoint of the authorities. She found documents about the removal of Molly, aged fourteen, and Gracie, aged eleven, but not any records about the removal of Daisy, aged eight. Pilkington also found telegrams, memos and letters sent by police and

[4] Pat Jacobs, *Mister Neville*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 1990, pp 160–1, 208–9

welfare officials as they pursued the escapees across the state. She researched the vegetation the girls would have encountered in the various districts they traversed, the land use by white farmers and pastoralists in the early 1930s, the contemporary pattern of tracks, roads and railways (some now long-closed), the animals the girls would have come across at that time of season, and the weather in those months of the year. All this allowed her to vividly describe the landscape and climate zones through which the girls travelled and give a credible account of the food they found for survival.[5]

Pilkington also uncovered some of the history of the Jigalong settlement and its relationship to the rabbit-proof fence the girls followed home. Jigalong had been established in 1907 as a government maintenance base for the workers who travelled up and down the fence, clearing away debris and mending any breaches in the wire. It also became a welfare depot where the government provided rations of food, clothing, blankets and tobacco to the nomadic Mardu people of the Gibson and Little Sandy Deserts. Gradually, the Mardu came to rely on these handouts. They came in from the desert and made Jigalong a permanent base where the old people could stay while others continued a semi-nomadic lifestyle, supplementing government rations with the hunting and gathering of traditional food. Molly's mother Maude was a full-blood Mardu who had learned to speak English while working as a domestic help for the Jigalong superintendent. Molly's father was Thomas Craig, a young Englishman employed as an inspector of the fence, who soon moved on.[6]

If history teachers insist on discussing this topic, they will find the book a much more reliable resource than the film. The book does not contain a number of the film's anachronisms about Neville's administration, does not misrepresent his ideas and, unlike the film, does not invent scenes for dramatic effect. In the book, there is no violent removal from Jigalong by motor car, there is no pursuit of the escapees by a sympathetic blacktracker, there is no help given them on their journey by a sexually exploited Aboriginal domestic servant. The film ends with entirely fictional scenes in which, close to death, two of the girls stagger across the last stretch of desert unaided. In reality, the book tells they were brought home by a white cattle station contractor, riding on his camels.

In particular, Pilkington's book does *not* contain the above speech attributed to A. O. Neville, which was composed for the movie by Christine Olsen, the scriptwriter. Olsen misrepresented the authority

[5] Doris Pilkington, *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence*, (1996), University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 2002 ed., pp xi–xiv, 34–6

[6] Pilkington, *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence*, pp 34–6

Neville had and the opinions he held in 1931. Despite the absence of records about the removal of the youngest girl Daisy, Olsen nonetheless decided to make Kenneth Branagh say she was betrothed to a full-blood Aboriginal man, thereby giving Neville another culturally insensitive reason to remove her. Pilkington, however, had the integrity not to put words in Neville's mouth in order to enhance the drama of her story. She did not suggest that 'breeding out the colour' played any part in the removals from Jigalong. Instead, she found the documentary record revealed three quite different reasons for the authorities' actions.

First, as half-castes, the girls were not readily accepted by full-blood society. The superintendent of the depot, Mr Keeling, became concerned about the attitude of the others to Molly and Gracie. He wrote to the Chief Protector that the girls would be better off if they were removed from Jigalong. They 'were not getting a fair chance as the blacks consider the H/Cs [half-castes] inferior to them'. Combined with her interviews with Molly and Daisy, this allowed Pilkington to reconstruct the following scenario:

> As she grew older, Molly often wished that she didn't have light skin so that she didn't have to play by herself. Most of the time she would sit alone, playing in the red dusty flats or in the riverbed depending where her family had set up camp. The dust-covered child stood out amongst her darker playmates. The Mardu children insulted her and said hurtful things about her. Some told her that because she was neither Mardu or wudgebulla [white] she was like a mongrel dog. She reacted in the only way she knew. She grabbed handfuls of sand or stones and threw them at her tormentors, and sometimes she chased them with a stick. After a while she became used to the insults, and although they still hurt she didn't show it.[7]

Second, in response to the growing number of half-castes in the state and the deteriorating economic conditions that forced them onto crude camps on the edge of white settlements, Neville's department had a policy of training part-Aboriginal children for occupations in which they were likely to be employed in white society. Pilkington described these policies as evidence of the authorities' benign intentions. She wrote:

> Official concern shifted from the decreasing numbers of traditional or full-blooded Aborigines to the half-castes and part-Aboriginal children who were being born all over the country. The common belief at the time was that part-Aboriginal children were more intelligent than their darker relations and should be isolated and trained to be domestic servants and

[7] Pilkington, *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence*, p 39

labourers. Policies were introduced by the government in an effort to improve the welfare and educational needs of these children.[8]

Third, and clearly the main reason for the removal of at least the two older girls, was a letter written to Neville in December 1930 by Mrs Chellow from Murra Munda Station near Jigalong. Pilkington found it in the Perth archives of the Department of Native Affairs. Mrs Chellow was concerned about the girls' sexual behaviour.

Murra Munda
9th December 1930

Mr Neville
Chief Protector of Aborigines
Perth

... There are two half-caste girls at Jigalong – Molly 15 years, Crissy [Gracie] 11 years; in my opinion I think you should see about them as they are running wild with the whites.

(Sgd.) Mrs Chellow[9]

At the time, ladies like Mrs Chellow could not frankly discuss sexual matters in an official letter, but there is no doubting the message she wanted to convey. 'Running wild', when applied to girls, was a contemporary euphemism for promiscuity; 'running wild with the whites' meant Molly and Gracie were having sex with the whites. The white men Mrs Chellow most likely meant were the maintenance workers on the rabbit-proof fence who, like the Englishman who had sex with Molly's mother fifteen years earlier, periodically stopped overnight at Jigalong on their long north–south tours of inspection. It was the information in this letter that finally led Neville to order the girls' removal. So, rather than being sent to the Moore River Settlement in order to be mated with white men, Mollie and Gracie were removed from Jigalong in order to be *protected* from white men. Unfortunately, the film neglects to give even the slightest suggestion that this might have been a motive. It also fails to say this was not a racially motivated policy. At the same time throughout Australia, under-age white girls who were sexually active were removed to institutions for exactly the same reason.[10]

Sexual abuse of Aboriginal women and girls was an issue that concerned Neville for many years. As he travelled around the state on tours of inspection, he kept a brown-covered notebook in which he

[8] Pilkington, *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence*, p 40

[9] Department of Native Affairs file no. 175/30, cited by Pilkington, *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence*, p 41

[10] Chapter Three contains a history of welfare policies and reasons for removal of white children.

recorded cases of child abuse, abduction, rape and violent death. Neville's biographer Pat Jacobs found the notebooks among his private papers. Had their contents ever been made public, Jacobs writes, they would have shocked the community.[11] By 1931, Neville had been trying for more than a decade to have his powers increased so he could prosecute white men who took advantage of the half-caste teenage girls who found jobs after leaving missions or government stations.

> I have endeavoured to have an amendment of the section brought about to include half-castes, and not until this is done will it be possible to do anything towards preventing these girls becoming the easy prey of the unscrupulous white man.[12]

He did not gain laws of this kind to protect half-caste girls over sixteen years of age until the new Act of 1936.

Neville lamented not just this environment but, given the paucity of his financial resources — by far the lowest per head of any similar department in Australia — how little he could hope to change it.

> In these respects under the existing system the department is powerless to exercise the necessary control. It has ... neither the necessary means nor facilities to do what is patently and urgently necessary if these people are to be turned into decent self-respecting citizens rather than a race of outcasts, which they are rapidly becoming.[13]

Her lack of appreciation of this fact leads Doris Pilkington into the only major misinterpretation in her otherwise credible story. In *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence*, she thinks Neville established institutions exclusively for half-caste Aboriginal children, one at Carrolup, the other at Moore River.[14] In fact, both were settlements that housed welfare-dependent, part-Aboriginal people of all ages, children and adults. The great majority were not kept there against their will. Apart from a small number of ex-prisoners on parole and unattached wards of the Chief Protector, they could come and go as they chose. Between 1930 and 1934 the Moore River Settlement admitted 1067 people, but over the same period 1030 people left.[15] At Moore River, the children were housed in separate dormitories for boys and girls, where some rudimentary training was given. Most of those housed

[11] Jacobs, *Mister Neville*, p 236

[12] *Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for the Year Ending 30th June 1918*, Government Printer, Perth, p 7

[13] Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Annual Report, 1932, cited in Jacobs, *Mister Neville*, p 204

[14] Pilkington, *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence*, p 40

[15] A. O. Neville, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 3 May 1934, transcript p 603

there were the children of parents who lived in other accommodation within the same settlement. In other words, despite the impression given by Phil Noyce's film, most children at Moore River were not forcibly or permanently separated from their parents. They slept apart but saw each other almost every day.

For most of the lives of these settlements, the state government provided only enough funding to enable one to remain open at any one time. Carrolup housed between 100 and 200 people from 1915 to 1922 when, as an economy measure, it was closed and not reopened until 1940. At any one time, Moore River held a population of between 100 and 400. It operated from 1918 to 1951.[16]

Pilkington also gave an exaggerated account of how children were recruited for these settlements and how much anxiety was generated by the threat of their removal. She wrote:

> Patrol officers travelled far and wide removing part Aboriginal children from their families and transported them hundreds of kilometres down south. Every mother of a part-Aboriginal child was aware that their offspring could be taken away from them at any time and they were powerless to stop the abductors.[17]

This was untrue. For most of Neville's tenure of office from 1915 to 1940, he had no patrol officers or travelling inspectors at all. He employed his sole official in this role, E. C. Mitchell, from 1925 to 1930. Mitchell did not roam the country looking for children to remove. His time was mainly consumed investigating working conditions, approving or rejecting permits for whites to employ full-blood Aborigines, and supervising handouts of rations on Aboriginal missions, settlements and pastoral stations. During the Great Depression, the loss of government revenue meant funds available to all government departments in Western Australia fell dramatically. Neville's departmental budget shrank to only 60 per cent of what it had been in 1911.[18] In 1930, the year before Molly, Gracie and Daisy were removed, government finances had shrunk so much that Treasury issued a directive that travel was no longer permitted in any department of the public service unless 'urgently necessary'. At the same time, Neville was forced to retrench his one travelling inspector Mitchell.[19]

[16] Peter Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens: The Aboriginal Problem in Western Australia 1898–1954*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1973, pp 155–6

[17] Pilkington, *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence*, p 40

[18] Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, pp 74–5

[19] Jacobs, *Mister Neville*, p 186

Instead, country administration was left to a few local magistrates, doctors and police. The responsibility for removing the three Jigalong girls belonged to Constable Riggs, the sole police officer for the district, based at Nullagine, 200 kilometres away. Riggs was nominally the local Protector of Aborigines but could only act on instruction by the department in Perth.[20] Given his habit of personally supervising the minutiae of his administration, Neville himself approved each recommendation for removal and filled out the forms. This is one detail the film *Rabbit-Proof Fence* does get right. It shows Neville personally writing out the orders for the removal of Molly, Gracie and Daisy, and even filling out the index cards for their files. But this very fact meant, of course, that the number of children that could be processed each year — while Neville and his six clerical staff also fulfilled the rest of their responsibilities to the state's 19,000 Aborigines in the settled districts — was tiny.[21]

The available records bear this out. In 1931, the Chief Protector's annual report revealed that Molly, Gracie and Daisy were three of only four Aboriginal children from the whole of Western Australia sent to the Moore River Settlement that year.[22] As Chapter Eight demonstrates, such a small number was not unusual. During Neville's entire 25–year administration, the admission rate of unattended children was abnormally high if it reached twenty in one year. In several years he sent no children there at all. Neville was only stating the obvious when he primly advised the commission: 'It cannot be said that the department has unduly exercised its powers in this direction.'[23]

[20] Western Australia, 42 of 1911, *An Act to Further Amend the Aborigines Act 1905*; A. O. Moseley, *Report of the Royal Commissioner Appointed to Investigate, Report, and Advise Upon Matters in Relation to the Condition and Treatment of Aborigines*, Government Printer, Perth, 1935, p 20

[21] The Chief Protector in Western Australia never had more than a skeleton staff. In 1906, he had only one clerk to assist him. By 1936 the staff was still only one clerk-in-charge and five clerks: Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, p 75

[22] *Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for the Year Ended 30th June 1931*, typescript version, p 12. The full record of Western Australian removals for 1931 was as follows: '*Removals under Section 12*: Eight warrants were issued in accordance with regulations made under the above section, transferring 25 natives from one part of the state to another. Of these 4 were admissions to the Moore River Native Settlement, 9 old and decrepit natives to La Grange Bay Feeding Depot and 9 released prisoners to the Kunmunya Mission, Port George IV.'

[23] Neville, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 3 May 1934, transcript p 604

THE AUSTRALIAN LEGEND IN BAZ LUHRMANN'S *AUSTRALIA*

In 2008, the story of the Stolen Generations became the sub-theme of Baz Luhrmann's romantic adventure film, *Australia*, set in the Northern Territory on the eve of the Second World War. Although most prominent film critics panned the movie, it did very well at the box office. By February 2009, after fourteen weeks of release, it had grossed $36.78 million in Australia, the second highest return of any Australian film, surpassed only by the $44.7 million taken by that other representative of outback adventure and heroism, *Crocodile Dundee*.[24] At least one Aboriginal academic and political activist, Marcia Langton, thought *Australia* momentous. It had, she imagined, embedded her own brand of radicalism within popular culture and had rewritten the Australian legend. Langton wrote:

> In his fabulous hyperbolic film *Australia*, Baz Luhrmann has leaped over the ruins of the 'history wars' and given Australians a new past — a myth of national origin that is disturbing, thrilling, heartbreaking, hilarious and touching.[25]

While national myths and legends do not have to be historically accurate in all respects, they are more likely to endure if they are at least historically plausible. The story of the Stolen Generations told in *Australia* struggled to make that grade. For a start, the typical child removed in the Northern Territory in the pre-war period was not a boy like Luhrmann's character Nullah, but a girl. In 1928 the Half-Caste Home in Darwin housed 56 girls but only 20 boys. By 1938, the ratio was 121 females to 32 males. These girls came mostly from fringe camps where they were vulnerable to prostitution and other kinds of sexual abuse. Of the 121 half-caste females in 1938, one quarter of them were inmates of the compound's 'lock hospital' for venereal disease.[26]

Second, in the 1930s the authorities preferred orphaned and neglected half-caste boys not to be sent to welfare institutions but to work on cattle stations. The author of the Territory's pre-war policy, J. W. Bleakley, said one reason more females than males were 'rescued' (his term) was due to:

> the practice of not removing the young males if the Protector is satisfied they are being looked after on the stations. As these young half-castes

[24] 'Baz Wins at Box Office', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 February 2009, p 9
[25] Marcia Langton, 'Faraway Downs Fantasy Resonates Close to Home', *The Age*, 23 November 2008
[26] *Report of the Administration of the Northern Territory for Year 1937–38*, p 25

> make useful station labour at an early age, the employers are reluctant to part with them.[27]

So in *Australia*, when Nicole Kidman's character, Lady Sarah Ashley, pleads with the Territory's fictional Chief Protector Dr Barker to let her keep Nullah, saying he would be better off on her cattle station than in a half-caste home, she is actually arguing what the real-life authorities thought too, and what really happened at the time.

Third, when Dr Barker denies Lady Ashley's request, saying 'We'll soon breed the colour out of him', he is not only contradicting the then existing practice but also talking nonsense, since it is biologically impossible to 'breed' anything 'out' of one person alone. It is true the Territory's real-life Chief Protector for most of the 1930s, Dr Cecil Cook, did subscribe to the notion of 'breeding out the colour', like A. O. Neville in Western Australia. But, again, this was a proposal about the marriage of adults, not the removal of children. Its aim was to encourage marriages between half-caste Aboriginal women and white men but, like Neville's experiment at the same time, it was also a failure. In the ten years Cook tried to implement his program, fewer than 50 mixed marriages of this kind were recorded.

Fourth, *Australia* played fast and loose with the truth when it portrayed Japanese soldiers occupying Mission Island. During the Second World War, the Japanese never invaded northern Australia, preferring to bomb it 97 times instead. But even if they had, it was quite wrong of the film to portray Territory authorities knowingly abandoning the island's half-caste boys to the Japanese invaders. In fact, the real-life children at the mission on Melville Island had been evacuated by ship to Darwin five days before it was bombed on 19 February 1942. The children were still in the port on the morning of the first attack but the authorities got them all away safely, with no one killed or injured, that same afternoon. For the rest of the war, Territory officials ensured they were kept out of harm's way in a Catholic community at Carrieton in the Flinders Ranges of South Australia.

As the final credits of *Australia* roll, Luhrmann links his story to the present period. A line of text informs the audience of the parliamentary apology given by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in February 2008. Nowhere, however, did either film or apology endorse the central claim made by academics and political activists about the Stolen Generations, that they were subject to genocide. Marcia Langton should have been very disappointed on this score. She was mistaken to imagine she was witnessing some kind of cultural revolution.

[27] J. W. Bleakley, *The Aboriginals and Half-Castes of Central Australia and North Australia*, Commonwealth Government, Melbourne, 1928, p 14

By the time Rudd won the 2007 election, the demand for the Prime Minister to say 'sorry' had gained considerable popular support. There was little doubt that by then millions of suburban voters, who had never felt any animosity towards Aboriginal people, wanted racial reconciliation and an end to all the bad feeling this issue had generated. Rudd sensed many people felt it was time to address what his speech called 'this unfinished business of the nation', and 'move on'. He did this in the most inexpensive way possible, offering warm words only, but no mention of genocide and no reparations. If Rudd truly believed children had been removed from loving parents for racist reasons, he had a moral (and probably legal) obligation to pay them tangible compensation. Instead, his avoidance of this issue meant the apology was primarily a public relations exercise for white audiences.

One thing Baz Luhrmann's movie did get right was its assumption of how Australians would respond to a story about stolen children like Nullah. Watching the film, we all instinctively take the side of the children. Luhrmann is doing no more than demonstrating something most of us once knew to be true: while we have had our share of scoundrels in authority, the real Australia would never have stooped so low as to try to eliminate the Aboriginal race by stealing its children. The fact that the film has been a popular success is telling. It shows that despite the best efforts of academics and schoolteachers to persuade us otherwise, Australia is not and never has been a country whose people would condone such practices.

INTRODUCTION

Australia's reputation for genocide

> The policy of forcible removal of children from Indigenous Australians to other groups for the purpose of raising them separately from and ignorant of their culture and people could properly be labelled 'genocidal' in breach of binding international law.
>
> — Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing Them Home*, 1997, co-authors Ronald Wilson and Mick Dodson [1]

MOST Australians would be taken aback to find that whenever academics in the field of genocide studies discuss history's worst examples, their own country is soon mentioned. The March 2001 edition of the London-based *Journal of Genocide Research* indicated the company Australia now keeps. That edition carried six articles, in the following order:

'The German Police and Genocide in Belorussia 1941–1944. Part 1: Police Deployment and Nazi Genocidal Directives', by Eric Haberer

'Comparative Policy and Differential Practice in the Treatment of Minorities in Wartime: The United States Archival Evidence on the Armenians and Greeks in the Ottoman Empire', by Rouben Paul Adalian

'Final Solutions, Crimes Against Mankind: On the Genesis and Criticism of the Concept of Genocide', by Uwe Makino

[1] Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children From Their Families*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, April 1997, p 275

'The Holocaust, the Aborigines, and the Bureaucracy of Destruction: An Australian Dimension of Genocide', by Paul R. Bartrop

'Did Ben-Gurion Reverse his Position on Bombing Auschwitz?', by Richard H. Levy

'Kalmykia, Victim of Stalinist Genocide: From Oblivion to Reassertion', by François Grin

According to Paul Bartrop of Deakin University, Australia deserves this place in the academic literature because our past policies towards Aboriginal children were comparable to those of Nazi Germany. 'It did not involve killing,' he admitted, 'but its ultimate objective was the same as Hitler's was for the Jews; namely, that at the end of the process the target group would have disappeared from the face of the earth.' Hence he declared with confidence: 'It is impossible to conclude otherwise than that Australia in the 1930s was possessed of an administrative culture that in reality practised genocide.'[2] In its first ten years from 1999 to 2009, the quarterly *Journal of Genocide Research* published twelve major articles of this kind about Australia. This was more than three times as many as the journal carried in the same period on the regime of Pol Pot in Cambodia. In Volume 10, Issue 4, 2008, no fewer than three of the seven articles were on Australia: one on the Stolen Generations and two on colonial history. Indicting Australia for genocide has become an academic obsession.

Australia's Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission made this charge notorious when in April 1997 it published *Bringing Them Home*, the report of its National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families. The report accused Australia of breaching the United Nations convention on genocide. For its historical analysis, the Commission relied heavily upon the work of a small number of university-based historians. Since then, the number of academics and academic programs in this field has grown exponentially to cash in on the demand created. Today, very few countries, and certainly none others of our size, devote the quantity of university resources that we now do to genocide studies. The field is concerned not only with the Stolen Generations but the so-called invasion of Australia and the genocide allegedly inherent in establishing British settlement here. The underlying agenda of this academic pursuit is not simply the study of genocide, let alone its analysis or prevention. Its aim is political, to argue that our own society and those like it, that is, Britain and the United

[2] Paul R. Bartrop, 'The Holocaust, the Aborigines, and the Bureaucracy of Destruction: An Australian Dimension of Genocide', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 3, 1, 2001, pp 83, 84–5

States, are every bit as bad as Nazi Germany. In the 2001 edition of the academic journal *Aboriginal History*, editors Ann Curthoys and John Docker of the Australian National University wrote:

> Settler-colonies like 'Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Argentina, the United States, and Canada' led the way in setting out to achieve what the Nazis also set out to achieve, the displacement of indigenous populations and their replacement by incoming peoples held to be racially superior.[3]

International academic book publishers know there is a market for such material. For their anthology *Genocide and the Modern Age*, editors Isidor Wallimann and Michael Dobkowski commissioned a chapter exclusively on Australia.[4] The only other countries singled out to this extent were Turkey, which got a chapter for its 1915–17 massacres of the Armenians, and, of course, Germany, which generated several chapters on the Holocaust. In the ten-volume series, *Studies on War and Genocide*, edited by Omer Bartov of Brown University, seven of the books commissioned were on Nazi Germany, two were general volumes about genocide in various places, but Australia was the only other country given a volume of its own, *Genocide and Settler Society*, published in 2004 and edited by Dirk Moses of the University of Sydney. Observing this publishing trend, University of New England historian Alan Atkinson commented:

> It is disturbing for an Australian to discover that debates about genocide often do not move very far beyond the classic area of study — Europe under the Nazis — before someone mentions the antipodes. Genocide is a crime, in other words, for which Australia is listed among the usual suspects.[5]

More recently, the focus on Australia has only intensified. In *Blood and Soil*, a world history of genocide published in 2007, the Australian expatriate historian Ben Kiernan of Yale University devoted more attention to the alleged genocidal activities of Australia than any other nation or region. His book had 61 pages about Australia, compared to the Armenian massacres (21 pages), the Nazi Holocaust (39 pages),

[3] Ann Curthoys and John Docker, 'Genocide: Definitions, Questions, Settler-Colonies', *Aboriginal History*, 25, 2001, p 14

[4] Tony Barta, 'Relations of Genocide: Land and Lives in the Colonization of Australia', in M. N. Dobkowski and I. Wallimann, eds, *Genocide in the Modern Age: Etiology and Case Studies of Mass Death*, Greenwood Press, New York, 1987

[5] Alan Atkinson, a review of the Australian volume, *Genocide and Settler Society: Frontier Violence and Stolen Indigenous Children in Australian History*, edited by A. Dirk Moses, in *Reviews in History*, http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/paper/atkinson.html

the Japanese atrocities in East Asia (31 pages), the Soviet Terror (26 pages), China under Mao (27 pages), and the genocides of Cambodia and Rwanda (32 pages).[6] Four of Kiernan's maps depicted scenes in Australia, the same number as Nazi Germany, Stalinist Russia and Maoist China put together. In 2008, Paul Bartrop repeated his earlier accusation. As co-author of two-volume work, *The Dictionary of Genocide*, he wrote the entry 'Australia, Genocide in'. He again applied the term genocide to the Stolen Generations, saying its use in that context 'could be sustained relatively easily'.[7]

In March 2009, one of Australia's best-known historians and essayists, Inga Clendinnen, reviewed the book *Guilt About the Past*, a collection of lectures by German novelist Bernhard Schlink. The lectures discussed how the modern German nation, now two generations distant from the Second World War, should approach the question of guilt for the Holocaust. Clendinnen was disappointed with the book, and wrote, almost as an aside: 'I had hoped the lecture titled *Forgiveness and Reconciliation* would speak to our situation in this country.'[8] In other words, literary reviews and intellectual discussion in this country now toss off the comparison between Australia and Nazi Germany as if it were so familiar one can now speak about it in shorthand — 'our situation in this country' — as though any possible debate is over.

WHY THERE WERE NO STOLEN GENERATIONS

The argument of this book is that Australia does not deserve this reputation. While the case against genocide for the Stolen Generations has already produced several effective critics, most notably anthropologists Ron Brunton and Kenneth Maddock, journalists Paddy McGuinness, Paul Sheehan and Andrew Bolt, and two former Ministers for Aboriginal Affairs, John Herron and Peter Howson,[9] a

[6] Ben Kiernan, *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination From Sparta to Darfur*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2008

[7] Paul Batrop and Samuel Totten, *Dictionary of Genocide*, two volumes, Greenwood Press, Westport, 2007; see also Rosemary Sorenson and Ashleigh Wilson, 'Stolen Generations Listed as Genocide', *The Australian*, 24 March 2008

[8] Inga Clendinnen, 'Drawing the Fangs of History', *The Australian Literary Review*, in *The Australian*, 4 March 2009, p 6

[9] Ron Brunton, *Betraying the Victims: The Stolen Generations' Report*, Institute of Public Affairs, Melbourne, February 1998; Kenneth Maddock, 'Genocide? The Silence of the Anthropologists', *Quadrant*, November 2000; P. P. McGuinness, 'Poor Fella My "Stolen Generation"', *Quadrant*, November 1999; Paul Sheehan, *The Electronic Whorehouse*, Macmillan, Sydney, 2003, Chapter 8; Andrew Bolt, 'Stolen Generations: My Melbourne Writers' Fes-

full defence of the charge has yet to be mounted. This book is longer, more detailed, and much less reader-friendly than it ought to be to gain a wide readership. But to address the full range of arguments made by the prosecution there was no alternative but to proceed comprehensively and forensically. That could only be accomplished properly by a complete re-examination of the foundation on which the case was originally made: its claim to be historically true.

My conclusion is that not only is the charge of genocide unwarranted, but so is the term 'Stolen Generations'. Aboriginal children were never removed from their families in order to put an end to Aboriginality or, indeed, to serve any improper government policy or program. The small numbers of Aboriginal child removals in the twentieth century were almost all based on traditional grounds of child welfare. Most children affected had been orphaned, abandoned, destitute, neglected or subject to various forms of domestic violence, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. Historians have given Western Australia a particularly loathsome reputation, but when you examine the records you find the majority of children placed in state Aboriginal settlements were from destitute families and they went there with their parents. In New South Wales, some children became part of an apprenticeship indenture program to help Aboriginal youth qualify for the workforce. A significant number of other children were voluntarily placed in institutions by Aboriginal parents to give them an education and a better chance in life.

Moreover, there is no fall-back position for those who want to argue that, even if the removals might not have quite amounted to genocide, they were still done for racist reasons. In Chapter Three I demonstrate in an analysis of welfare policy for white children that none of the policies that allowed the removal of Aboriginal children were unique to them. They were removed for the same reason as white children in similar circumstances. Even the program to place Aboriginal children in apprenticeships was a replica of measures that had already been applied to white children in welfare institutions in New South Wales for several decades, and to poor English children for several centuries before that.

Chapters Three and Eight also discuss several pieces of legislative discrimination against Aboriginal people and their children that derived from the system of Aboriginal protectionism in the first half of the twentieth century. In some states officials treated Aboriginal

tival Speech', 5 September 2006; Senator John Herron, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Federal Government Submission to Senate Legal and Constitutional References Committee, Inquiry into the Stolen Generation, March 2000; Peter Howson, 'Rescued From the Rabbit Burrow: Understanding the "Stolen Generations"', *Quadrant*, June 1999

people who lived on reserves, government stations, and on state-funded missions, depots and settlements as though they were the equivalent of white inmates of welfare institutions. I have no desire in this book to defend these last measures since they effectively treated Aborigines as second-class citizens. However, the critical question in the debate over the Stolen Generations is not whether *all* Aboriginal policy was free of discrimination. Rather, it is why were some Aboriginal children removed from their parents. The answer was the same for black children as it was for white. They were subject to the standard child welfare policies of their time. This is not to say the laws were all the same for black and white children. In some states they were quite different. Nonetheless, the *intentions* behind the laws that allowed the state to remove children, whether black or white, were the same.

One critical point that has always been avoided by the historians of the Stolen Generations is that full-blood children were rarely, and in many places never, removed from their parents. By the early decades of the twentieth century, most Aborigines in the southern half of the Australian continent were people of part descent, but in the northern half, full descent populations predominated. In the Kimberley district and the Northern Territory, half-castes constituted a small minority of indigenous people. From Federation to the Second World War, the policies of the Queensland, Western Australian and Commonwealth governments were to preserve full-blood Aboriginal communities inviolate. By the 1920s and 1930s, when it became clear the full-blood population was not dying out as previously thought, but was actually increasing in some places, these governments established reserves of millions of acres and passed laws forbidding Europeans and Asians from entering Aboriginal communities, employing or removing full-blood Aborigines without permission, having sexual relations with them, or providing them with alcohol or opium.

Overwhelmingly, in the north of the continent, the Aboriginal children subject to removal policies came from the minority of half-castes and those of lesser descent. They were removed for both traditional welfare reasons and to help some gain education and training for the workforce. In the local idiom, the latter was known as 'giving them a chance'. The only full-blood children taken into care were those chronically ill, dangerously malnourished or severely disabled, but this was uncommon. Less urgent cases of child abuse and neglect among full-bloods were ignored and simply regarded as Aboriginal business.

This is yet another reason why the charge of genocide is untenable. The United Nations Convention on Genocide, Article 2, defines acts of genocide as those 'committed with intent to destroy, in whole or

in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such'. Half-castes and those of lesser descent did not constitute any such group. Their identity varied enormously. Some saw themselves and were treated by others as Aborigines, but there were many who did not. In some communities, full-blood people accepted half-castes; in others they were not regarded as true Aborigines at all; in some cases, half-caste babies born to tribal women were routinely put to death. Chapters Seven and Ten discuss evidence about many half-caste people who did not identify as members of a distinct racial community, and indeed, were more concerned to emulate white people and live like other Australians.

To say there were no Stolen Generations is not to argue there were no forcible removals of Aboriginal children from their families. There were many forcible removals in the period under discussion, just as there are today. Parents who neglected their children, who let them go hungry, who abused them with violence, who prostituted them, who let them run wild with no supervision, or who drank themselves into an alcoholic stupor while leaving children to their own devices, all faced forcible removals — often by the police and occasionally under scenes of great duress. Academic historians and Aboriginal activists, however, have redefined all these legitimate removals as racist and genocidal. Only by this means have they been able to mount the semblance of a case. A detailed study of the surviving individual case records in New South Wales in Chapter Two reveals an array of reasons for removal far too broad to fit into any single-minded bureaucratic program.

Some Aboriginal children do have genuine grounds for grievance, but they are not alone. In the rough justice of child welfare policy, white children could be treated harshly too, especially if their mothers were unmarried. Until as recently as the 1970s, such children, white or black, were frequently removed on grounds that we would not approve today. Before governments began paying pensions to unmarried mothers in the 1970s, children could be charged with neglect because they lacked a father, and thus a means of support. Until then, unmarried white teenage girls who fell pregnant were strongly pressured by both church and state to give up their babies, who were often taken from them at birth and adopted out to other families. But in these cases the child's fate was determined not by its colour but by its illegitimacy. There was a common presumption throughout Australia that unmarried teenage mothers, black or white, could not and should not be left to bring up the children they bore.[10]

[10] The literature on this topic is now substantial but for a useful account of government policy see: Legislative Council of New South Wales, Standing

White children too were removed from parents in ways that now appear to us to be unfair.

Some people removed as children remember their former family life as a time when they were happy and well cared for. They recall their removal as an event of great trauma. There is no reason to doubt they are telling the truth. Some of their testimony is inherently convincing. They could not possibly have invented the kind of trauma they described. There were others, however, who remembered trauma from another source — their own homes: 'I can understand why they took me,' one former inmate of the Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls' Home told an interviewer in 1994. 'Mum and dad were terrible when they were on the grog — in fact we were dead scared.'[11] The problem with the Stolen Generations thesis is that childhood recollections constitute the only credible evidence its adherents have provided to make their case. But no amount of childhood anecdotes can establish the argument's central thesis that the intentions of the authorities were both criminal and racist. That accusation was embedded in both the words of the term. The adjective 'stolen' said the removals were deliberately intended to achieve an illegal result. The noun 'generations' said this objective was targeted at a particular line of people across successive age cohorts. The childhood memories of individuals are not enough to establish that governments had such intent or such perseverance. Indeed, memories of childhood trauma are consistent with forcible removals for the same welfare reasons as white children.

The case for the Stolen Generations needed a convincing account of government policies towards Aboriginal children. However, this book's examination of the primary source evidence reveals there is a void at the very core of the case. There was no unequivocal statement by anyone in genuine authority that child removal was intended to end Aboriginality. The only support for that proposition has come from creative interpretations of selected statements taken out of context by politically motivated historians. Moreover, the lack of government words on the subject was matched by the lack of government action. The handful of places allocated for the care of Aboriginal children, the tiny budgets that supported the government boards and departments, and the archival records that show how small a frac-

Committee on Social Issues, *Releasing the Past: Adoption Practices 1950–1998, Final Report*, December 2000

[11] Recalled by a former inmate of the Cootamundra Girls' Home, quoted by Merryl-Leigh Brindley, The Home on the Hill: The Story Behind the Cootamundra Girls' Home, MA (Aboriginal Studies) thesis, University of South Australia, 1994, p 175

tion of the Aboriginal population they affected, all render the thesis completely implausible.

Another of the central claims of the academic historians who created this story was that children were taken by authorities as young as possible so they would never inherit Aboriginal culture. 'The younger the child the better,' according to Henry Reynolds, 'before habits were formed, attachments, language learnt, traditions absorbed.'[12] In the SBS Television series, *First Australians*, scriptwriters Beck Cole and Louis Nowra confidently declared: 'Between 1910 and 1970 an estimated 50,000 Aboriginal children were removed from their families. Most were aged under five.'[13] None of those who make this assertion have ever backed it with proper evidence, such as a breakdown of the ages of the children sent to various institutions. All the available evidence shows their claims are completely untrue.

The statistics of child removals in this book reveal those most commonly affected in New South Wales were not the very young but those at workforce entry age, which in rural districts in the first half of the twentieth century was normally thirteen, fourteen and fifteen years. This was because of the influence of the state's apprentice indenture scheme. In Western Australia and the Northern Territory the age of the few separations correlated with primary school age. This was because many part-Aboriginal children in these regions were sent by their parents to board at government and religious hostels and institutions that sent them to school. Whatever their circumstances, it was rare for babies and infants to be removed. In one archive of 800 children removed between 1907 and 1932 in New South Wales, only seven were babies aged twelve months or less and only eighteen aged between twelve months and two years. Some governments had policies that strictly forbade removing Aboriginal babies unless they were orphans or urgently needed hospitalization for disease or malnutrition.

Another deception is the assertion by historians that most children were removed permanently, that they were never meant to see their parents again. 'The break from family, kin and community must be decisive and permanent,' Henry Reynolds has written. 'If young people could return to their families the effort had been wasted.'[14] Chapter Two provides good evidence that this was also untrue. The case records show a clear majority of children removed in New South Wales returned either to their families or to Aboriginal communities. In fact, welfare authorities gave the older ones assistance such as

[12] Henry Reynolds, *Nowhere People*, Viking, Melbourne, 2005, p 219

[13] Episode Five: 'An Unhealthy Government Experiment', *First Australians: The Untold Story of Australia*, Beck Cole director, SBS Television, 2008

[14] Reynolds, *Nowhere People*, p 219

money for the rail fare home, and usually accompanied the younger ones on the train. In other states, especially Western Australia, government institutions like the notorious Moore River Settlement and religious missions across northern Australia admitted the majority of child inmates *with* their parents. Institutions for indigent Aborigines of all ages have been widely but wrongly characterized by historians, television producers and filmmakers as homes exclusively for children, when they never were.

Rather than acting for racist reasons, government officers and religious missionaries wanted to rescue children from welfare camps and shanty settlements riddled with alcoholism, domestic violence and sexual abuse. Evidence throughout this book shows public servants, doctors, police and missionaries appalled to find Aboriginal girls between five and eight years of age suffering from sexual abuse and venereal disease. They were dismayed to sometimes find girls of nine and ten years old hired out as prostitutes by their own parents. That was why the great majority of children removed by authorities were female. The fringe camps where this occurred were early twentieth–century versions of today's notorious remote communities of central and northern Australia. Indeed, there is a direct line of descent from one to the other — the culture of these camps has been reproducing itself across rural Australia for more than 100 years. Government officials had a duty to rescue children from such settings, as much then as they do now. From the perspective of child welfare officials, the major problem was that state treasuries would not give the relevant departments and boards sufficient funds to accommodate all the neglected and abused children who *should* have been removed.

THE FATE OF THE STOLEN GENERATIONS THESIS IN THE COURTS

> The uncomfortable truth for us all is that the parliaments of the nation, individually and collectively, enacted statutes and delegated authority under those statutes that made the forced removal of children on racial grounds fully lawful.
>
> — Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, Apology to Australia's Indigenous peoples, House of Representatives, 13 February 2008

> [I]ntegration of part Aboriginal children was not based on race; it was based on a sense of responsibility — perhaps misguided and paternalistic — for those children who had been deserted by their white fathers and who were living in tribal conditions with their Aboriginal mothers. Care for those children was perceived to be best offered by affording them the opportunity of acquiring a western education so that they might then more easily be integrated into western society.
>
> — Justice Maurice O'Loughlin, judgement in *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, Federal Court of Australia, August 2000, para 162

If the Stolen Generations story were true, its members should have had many victories in the courts, now that the tide of opinion is firmly on their side. The charges involved serious breaches of the law — false imprisonment, misfeasance of public office, breach of duty of care, and breach of fiduciary and statutory duties — and human rights lawyers and Aboriginal legal aid services have been lining up for years to take their cases. Yet only one claimant has ever been successful before a court. This was Bruce Trevorrow who in 2007 was awarded $525,000 by the South Australian Supreme Court. Given the huge size of the potential client base, and the fact that Aboriginal people and their lawyers have had a grievance about the issue for more than 25 years, the lack of legal success is telling. On its own, it is enough to seriously question whether there really were any Stolen Generations.

In his apology in the House of Representatives in February 2008, Kevin Rudd avoided any use of the term genocide but he did accuse the parliaments of the nation of enacting racist statutes. That accusation, however, was untrue, as either Rudd or his speechwriters would have known were they familiar with either of the two major test cases on the Stolen Generations. The best-known of those cases, *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, was decided by Justice Maurice O'Loughlin in the Federal Court in August 2000. Counsel for the applicants, Ms M. Richards, had submitted that the Northern Territory in the 1940s and 1950s had a policy called 'the removal policy' and 'the half-caste policy'. She said that, because it targeted only half-caste children, it was based on race rather than welfare. It was pursued 'without regard for the welfare of individual children or their individual circumstances'. In his judgement, Justice O'Loughlin said:

> I cannot accept that submission; it failed to recognize those decisions of the High Court to which reference has already been made that classified the legislation as beneficial and protectionist; it failed to recognize that there was then, as there is now, an acceptance of the need for special legislation and special consideration for Aboriginal people. Finally, there was absolutely no causative link connecting 'race' to a failure to have regard for the welfare of children. The existence of one does not preclude the existence of the other.[15]

What the judge meant by 'those decisions of the High Court to which reference has already been made', were several verdicts, the most recent of which had been *Kruger v. Commonwealth; Bray v. Commonwealth*. That was a judgement made by the full bench of the

[15] O'Loughlin J, *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, 11 August 2000, para 786

High Court in July 1997 but which today is largely unknown outside legal circles. Yet it was the major case that considered whether the removal of Aboriginal children amounted to genocide. Although handed down only two months after the *Bringing Them Home* report accused the nation of that very crime, most news media and virtually all members of the political commentariat ignored it. Since then, they have pretended it never existed. I discuss its findings in more detail in Chapter Ten, but let me observe here that five of the six judges commented specifically on the question of genocide. Counsel for the plaintiffs argued that the Northern Territory's Aboriginal Ordinance of 1918, which permitted the Chief Protector and Director of Native Affairs to remove and detain all Aboriginal people in the Territory, including children, thereby breached the United Nations Convention on Genocide. All five judges rejected the claim. Justice Daryl Dawson said:

> there is nothing in the 1918 Ordinance, even if the acts authorized by it otherwise fell within the definition of genocide, which authorizes acts committed with intent to destroy in whole or in part any Aboriginal group. On the contrary, as has already been observed, the powers conferred by the 1918 Ordinance were required to be exercised in the best interests of the Aboriginals concerned or of the Aboriginal population generally. The acts authorized do not, therefore, fall within the definition of genocide contained in the Genocide Convention.

Justice Michael McHugh concurred:

> The 1918 Ordinance did not authorize genocide. Article II of the Genocide Convention relevantly defines genocide to mean certain acts 'committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such'. The acts include 'imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group' and 'forcibly transferring children of the group to another group'. There is, however, nothing in the 1918 Ordinance that could possibly justify a construction of its provisions that would authorize the doing of acts 'with intent to destroy, in whole or in part' the aboriginal race.

In short, when they tested specific policies before the Federal Court, and when they argued the general intentions of the parliaments and legislators before the High Court, the historians and political activists who invented the notion of the Stolen Generations proved incapable of substantiating their case. As far as Australia's highest courts are concerned, the central hypothesis of the Stolen Generations is legally extinct.

The only legal cases with any potential credibility would be those made by individuals such as Bruce Trevorrow, who was unlawfully removed from his family and suffered badly as a result. But as Chapter Twelve demonstrates, the Trevorrow case did not confirm the Stolen

Generations thesis. Instead, it provided yet more evidence to disprove it.

HOW MANY CHILDREN WERE REMOVED?

> Even though one forced removal would be regarded today as one too many, the numbers in the Administrator's report, if accurate, do not support an argument that there was a large scale policy of forced removals occurring in this period.
>
> — Justice Maurice O'Loughlin, judgement in *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, August 2000, on the paucity of child removals in the Northern Territory in the 1940s and 1950s[16]

In the Prime Minister's apology, he said the total number of children wrongly removed between 1910 and 1970 was 'up to 50,000'. He said this meant between 10 and 30 per cent of Aboriginal children had been 'forcibly' taken from their parents. The *Bringing Them Home* report claimed that between one in ten and one in three Aboriginal children were 'forcibly removed'. In reality, these claims were unwarranted guesses. Indeed, the Human Rights Commission seriously misrepresented some of the principal research it used to reach the higher figure. As an example of the rate of removal, it reported the findings of one study made in Bourke:

> Dr Max Kamien surveyed 320 adults in Bourke in the 1970s. One in every three reported having been separated from their families in childhood for five or more years.[17]

That was *not* the study's rate for the separation of children 'from their families'. What Kamien actually found was this:

> Between the ages of 5 and 14 years 34 per cent of the 320 adult males and females interviewed had experienced the absence of one parent for more than five years. Absence of both parents for the same time period was recorded in 5 per cent of males and 7 per cent of females.[18]

Moreover, the great majority of the 'absences' recorded by Kamien were not forcible removals. Most occurred simply because the fathers were away from home, working on rural properties. Of children separated from both parents, Kamien found the most common reason was not to lose their culture but to go to hospital. In four of the other six studies it cited, *Bringing Them Home* seriously misreported the

[16] O'Loughlin J., *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth,* 11 August 2000, para 226

[17] *Bringing Them Home*, p 36

[18] Max Kamien, *The Dark People of Bourke: A Study of Planned Social Change*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, and Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands NJ, 1978, p 169

results. Of the remaining two studies, one was unpublished and no one else can find any record of the other. Chapter Thirteen examines the charade of research interpretations on which the Human Rights Commission made its 'confident findings'.

My own estimate of the total number of Aboriginal children taken into care in the period from 1880 to 1970 is provided in Chapter Thirteen. The total is 8250. 'Taken into care' means Aboriginal children separated from parents and placed in government, church and charitable institutions, plus the very small numbers placed into foster care and adopted by white families. The figure represented 5.2 per cent of the Aboriginal population at the 1976 census of 160,000.

This total is not offered as a counter estimate of the number of the Stolen Generations. The argument of this book is that there were *no* Stolen Generations. The figure is an overall estimate made from the surviving records of children separated from their families for substantial periods under the broadest range of conditions, both voluntary and involuntary, and for all kinds of reasons, both good (education and health care) and bad (neglect, destitution, sexual abuse, and the death of parents). The total and the proportion are much lower figures than are usually claimed but they demonstrate another theme of this book. Rather than governments being over-zealous, the reality was the opposite. Everyone who worked in Aboriginal child welfare complained that the states and territories did not do nearly enough, especially in the period from Federation to the Second World War. There were always many more Aboriginal children badly in need of welfare, education and health services than governments were willing to fund.

The most offensive numerical assertion in this debate, that the removal of children was on a scale large enough to be genocidal, is not just wrong but embarrassingly wrong. In the first half of the twentieth century, when university historians and *Bringing Them Home* assured us governments were doing their best to eliminate the Aboriginal race, its population grew substantially. In the period nominated by the Human Rights Commission as the worst affected, 1910 to 1970, the Aboriginal population of Australia grew by 68 per cent from 83,588 to 139,456.[19] Growth was particularly strong in those regions where governments were purportedly determined to absorb half-caste and other part-Aboriginal people into the white population. In New South Wales, the Aboriginal population grew by 65 per cent from 1915 to 1940. In Western Australia, the supposedly

[19] *Bringing Them Home*, p 37; Wray Vamplew, ed., *Australians: Historical Statistics*, Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, Sydney, 1987, Table IEO 1–9, p 4

'doomed race' of full-descent people in the north of the state did not decline at all, while in the southern half of the state, where part-Aboriginal people predominated, their numbers were up no less than 120 per cent between 1900 and 1935. In both cases, their populations grew at a faster rate than among white people. Chapters Two and Seven have the details. If the Stolen Generations thesis is true then the Australian Aborigines are the only people in world history to have suffered genocide in the midst of a boom in their population.

EDUCATION VERSUS INSTITUTIONALIZATION

There is another good reason why it was not the policy of government to remove Aboriginal children from their parents: It wanted them to go to school. The government pursued this objective with far more action and money than it ever gave child removal. In the 1880s all Australian colonial governments instituted compulsory education for children of school age. All parents, of whatever racial or ethnic background, were required to enroll their children. In New South Wales, the Department of Public Instruction constructed schoolhouses and employed schoolteachers on all the 21 Aboriginal stations set up between 1893 and 1917. It also provided schools and teachers on any of the 115 Aboriginal reserves that had enough children of school age to justify it. On those reserves where there were not enough children for a dedicated school, the Aborigines Protection Board insisted they must go to the local public school. In the early years, it tried to coerce Aboriginal parents into sending their children to school by withholding rations if they refused. In its later years, it tried a more conciliatory approach by giving all Aboriginal children a hot midday meal at school.[20]

In the early twentieth century, it was true that much provision for Aboriginal schooling was substandard. Many Aboriginal children received a lower-level curriculum than whites. In some parts of New South Wales and Western Australia, protests by white parents about Aboriginal standards of hygiene and disease (including, as I demonstrate in Chapter Four, cases of venereal disease among Aboriginal primary school children) meant some public schools refused to enroll them. Nonetheless, the number of places governments provided for Aboriginal children who lived with their parents and went to school, compared to the number of places governments funded at welfare institutions for those removed from parents, is telling. In New South

[20] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report*, 1888, *Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales*, Vol 5, p 655; *Report*, 1892, p 3; *Report*, 1925, p 2; J. J. Fletcher, *Clean, Clad and Courteous: A History of Aboriginal Education in New South Wales*, J. J. Fletcher, Sydney, 1989

Wales in the 1920s and 1930s, there were only three welfare institutions designated for Aboriginal children. One at Bomaderry housed 25 infants to 10-year-olds, the second at Cootamundra accommodated 50 girls aged up to 13 years, and the third at Kinchela housed 50 boys aged up to 13 years. At the same time, some 2800 Aboriginal children in New South Wales lived with their parents and attended public schools.[21] That is, there were 22 times as many places for Aboriginal children at public schools than at welfare institutions.

In the Northern Territory in the 1950s, almost none of the approximately 8000 full-blood Aboriginal children either attended school or were housed in a welfare institution. For part-Aboriginal children the government pursued a policy of integration and assimilation. But even here, there were between two and three times as many part-Aboriginal children living with their families and attending schools than housed in welfare institutions. In 1959, for instance, there were 815 part-Aboriginal children at Northern Territory schools and 315 part-Aboriginal children in institutions.[22] Of the latter, many were sent by their parents to be boarders while they went to school. Chapter Ten discusses this role played by the Retta Dixon Home in Darwin and St Mary's Hostel in Alice Springs.

On the grounds of school policy alone, no one can argue that the government was conducting a systematic program to destroy Aboriginality by stealing children from their families. The existence of this disparity disproves the core allegation of the Stolen Generations thesis.

THE ORIGINS OF THE MYTH

The empirical underpinnings of *Bringing Them Home* derived largely from the work of white academic historians. The Human Rights Commission did no serious research of its own into the primary historical sources. Co-authors Ronald Wilson and Mick Dodson also declined to hear any evidence that might have contradicted their preferred interpretation. They did not call witnesses from many of the still-living public officials responsible for child removal to hear or test their reasons for their policies and practices. The commission's only original contribution was to solicit the testimony of 535 Aboriginal people who had been removed from their parents and who spoke about their own experiences. While many of these stories were

[21] Chapter Three has a more detailed comparative analysis of numbers of enrolments at welfare homes, at schools on Aboriginal stations and at public schools.

[22] O'Loughlin J., *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, 11 August 2000, para 227

completely believable in what they said about what happened and how they felt, it is nonetheless true that when these witnesses were children they were not in a position to comprehend the question at the centre of the accusation of genocide, the motives of government policy makers.

Moreover, some of these informants made claims that should never have been published. In *Bringing Them Home*, the anonymous 'Jennifer' claimed one child at the Cootamundra Girls Home was beaten to death by the staff, who then secretly disposed of the body. As Chapter Five argues, this assertion deserves no credibility whatsoever and, indeed, was a malicious defamation of the matron at the time, Miss Emmeline Rutter. History books have reproduced other tall tales from allegedly stolen children that could not possibly be true. One gave a vivid first-hand account of 500 children supposedly rounded up in 1938. The alleged aim was to remove all the half-caste children in the Kimberley district to the Western Australian government's Moola Bulla station. However, as shown in Chapter Eight, the entire population of half-caste people in the Kimberley at the time, adults and children, amounted to just 500 and the station's records of the full-blood and half-caste children it accommodated and fed at Moola Bulla that year numbered only 61. Most had been sent by their parents to go to the station's school.

Some of the most celebrated books by Aboriginal authors about supposedly stolen children also provide serious grounds for contention, especially the works of Margaret Tucker and Sally Morgan. These and other stories told by well-known Aborigines Lowitja O'Donoghue and Charles Perkins are discussed in Chapter Six. I also discuss there the influence of the Communist Party of Australia, which few people realize played a key role in making some Aboriginal authors famous.

The idea that the removal policies had a racist component and were aimed at ending Aboriginality did not originate in Aboriginal testimony. Indeed, until the term 'stolen generations' first appeared in 1981, there had been no popular tradition among Aboriginal people that employed either the term or the concept. In the 1910s and 1920s, parents on some state-funded Aboriginal stations in New South Wales and South Australia did disagree with the government finding employment for their teenage children as four-year indentured apprentices. But these complaints were not about the removal of babies or young children. Moreover, these parents knew their children would be gone for a fixed term and then return.

The person who initiated the idea that the government wanted to destroy Aboriginality was a then unknown white postgraduate history student, Peter Read. He alone was granted the vision denied to all

who came before him. In the course of just one day, he wrote a twenty-page pamphlet to make his case. His original title was 'The Lost Generations' but his wife advised him to substitute the more attention-getting adjective 'stolen'.

Read's publication, *The Stolen Generations*, was published in 1981 and was noticed within social policy and legal circles, but not much elsewhere. The critical turning point in the attitudes of Aboriginal people did not come until two years later. Read's colleague in the Link-Up social work organization, Coral Edwards, addressed a meeting of the National Aboriginal Consultative Council to ask for funding for their new service. To the 40, mostly middle-aged Aboriginal community leaders, who until then had been ignorant of any racist separation policy, Edwards's speech came as a bombshell. Mothers had not voluntarily given their children away, she said. Rather, 'the governments never intended that the children should ever return'.[23]

It is not difficult to understand the immediate appeal of such an explanation to many Aboriginal families, especially to those who had grown up on welfare communities and segregated housing estates with high rates of crime, alcoholism, domestic violence and child abuse. This new version of events was deeply comforting. The myriad problems in their own lives no longer derived from the failings of their families or the bad choices they made themselves. Mothers had not given their children away, fathers had not left their children destitute or deserted their families or been so consumed by alcohol they left them vulnerable to sexual predators. Siblings and cousins had not abandoned their communities because they thought their way of life hopeless. Instead of reproaching themselves, Aborigines could suddenly identify as morally innocent victims of a terrible injustice. Their problems could all be blamed on faceless white bureaucrats driven by racism. Since Read created this interpretation, it has come to be believed by most Aboriginal people in Australia.

That does not make the story true. Indeed, as an historical interpretation of government policy in the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, it was poorly founded from the outset. Its creator once boasted he had read 'all the thousands of childcare records of the NSW Aborigines Protection Board'.[24] However, Read could not have done anything like the investigation he claimed. His research for *The Stolen Generations* was so shoddy he was completely ignorant of the existence of one government and mission-run institution in New

[23] Peter Read, *A Rape of the Soul so Profound: The Return of the Stolen Generations*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1999, p 72
[24] Read, *Rape of the Soul*, p 176

South Wales that housed Aboriginal children for nineteen years, and he attributed to another institution a fifteen-year history that bore little relationship to what it actually did. Chapter Five provides the details. He drew selectively on the individual case files of removed children to bolster his case, but misrepresented the total picture. He provided false information about the age of children concerned and the proportion of them who never returned to their families and communities. He selected from government minutes and reports a small number of apparently incriminating quotations, took them out of context, and gave them a meaning their originators never intended. What little support for his thesis he could find he exaggerated out of all proportion. He claimed the Ward Registers of the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Board openly revealed the real motives of those in charge:

> The racial intention was obvious enough for all prepared to see, and some managers cut a long story short when they came to that part of the committal notice 'Reason for Board taking control of the child'. They simply wrote 'for being Aboriginal'.[25]

My examination of the 800 files in the same archive found only one official ever wrote a phrase like that. His actual words were 'Being an Aboriginal'.

In the early twentieth century, according to Read, the Australian authorities began to realize the Aborigines were not 'dying out' as once thought. Instead, the number of half-castes and others of part descent was increasing. So instead of being rid of the Aboriginal race by natural causes, governments decided they had to do the job themselves. 'In the long term, Aborigines were not wanted — anywhere,' Read wrote. 'Their extinction, it seemed, would not occur naturally after all, but would have to be arranged.'[26] One of Read's academic colleagues, the historian Heather Goodall, said the New South Wales government tried to do this by deliberately reducing the Aboriginal birth rate. This was, she claimed, the publicly declared reason the Aborigines Protection Board introduced its policy of youth apprenticeships:

> The Board stated quite openly in its reports and minutes that it intended to reduce the birthrate of the Aboriginal population by taking adolescent girls away from their communities. Then it intended that the young peo-

[25] Peter Read, *The Stolen Generations: The Removal of Aboriginal Children in New South Wales 1883 to 1969*, NSW Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, Sydney, Occasional Paper No. 1, Sydney, 1981, p 6. The pamphlet carried no date but in a later work, Read dated its publication as 1981: Read, *A Rape of the Soul So Profound*, pp vii, 214.

[26] Read, *Rape of the Soul*, p 22

> ple taken in this way would never be allowed to return to their homes or to any other Aboriginal community. The 'apprenticeship' policy was aimed quite explicitly at reducing the numbers of identifying Aboriginal people in the State.'[27]

Goodall did not give any specific source for her claim. Instead, she referred readers of her book *Invasion to Embassy* to the Aborigines Protection Board's annual reports for the whole period 1906 to 1923. I read the board's reports not only for the years she suggested but also for its entire 85 years' existence, looking for any comment about its intention to reduce the Aboriginal birth rate. I could not find anything of the kind. Instead, the board explained its apprenticeship policy in 1924 in the following terms:

> [The Board's] object is to save the children from certain moral degradation on the reserves and camps, and to give them a chance to reach maturity, after which they are given every facility to return either on holiday or *permanently*, according to their wish, to their own districts, where they are expected to take up suitable employment. Here they have an opportunity of meeting people of their own colour, and in many instances they marry and settle down in homes of their own.[28]

The board also defined its policy in very similar terms in its minutes of June 1919 and its annual report of 1925–26. Chapter Three quotes them in full and examines the board's real objectives. In short, the board saw a period of apprenticeship as the key to gaining employment, and the best way for Aboriginal youth to get off welfare and live independent lives in the modern world. It wanted to put an end not to the Aboriginal race but to Aboriginal dependency.

The Human Rights Commission used Read, Goodall and other academic historians as its major sources of information on government policy, thereby replicating their omissions, mistakes and falsehoods. *Bringing Them Home* copied a passage from Pat Jacobs's biography of A. O. Neville, which quoted the Western Australian Chief Protector apparently announcing that in the 'best interests' of Aboriginal children he intended to remove as many as possible from their parents: 'I say emphatically there are scores of children in the bush camps who should be taken away from whoever is looking after them and placed in a settlement ...'[29] This quotation, however, was a truncated version of what Neville actually said. His full sentence was:

[27] Heather Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1770–1972*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1996, p 120

[28] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1924–25*, p 2 (emphasis added)

[29] *Bringing Them Home*, p 109. The ellipsis is included in the quotation that *Bringing Them Home* reproduced from Pat Jacobs, *Mister Neville*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 1990, p 235.

'I say emphatically there are scores of children in the bush camps who should be taken away from whoever is looking after them and placed in a settlement, but on account of lack of accommodation, and lack of means and additional settlements, I am unable to exercise the power which the Act definitely gives me in this respect.'[30] In other words, instead of a declaration of intent to remove scores of such children, Neville's full statement was actually an explanation why he could *not* remove them. As Chapter Eight shows in detail, he never had the funds to remove more than a handful each year. The same was true of the Chief Protectors in other states. None of them ever had enough money to remove all the genuine child welfare cases within their domain, let alone attempt as immense a task as eliminating the Aboriginal race.

That did not mean, however, that Aboriginal institutions were as impoverished as historians have painted them. Though conceding that they were not as terrible as the mass extermination camps of Nazi Germany, historian Anna Haebich nonetheless claimed: 'Aboriginal people in Australia's refugee camps and gulags faced for a far longer period the daily reality of starvation, disease, chronic ill health and often early death.'[31] It is true the Moore River Settlement in Western Australia was a vermin-infested dump, and some of the remote missions in the tropical north ran short of food supplies in the wet season and during periods of prolonged drought, but they were not typical. The best Aboriginal stations had superior buildings and more amenities than many white working class people in the outer suburbs and country towns at the same time. Some institutions for Aboriginal children had swimming pools, gymnasiums, tennis courts, film projectors, radios, record players, pianos and telephones decades before many white people. Chapter Five contains details. In the midst of the 1930s Great Depression, the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Board used unemployment relief funds to provide its La Perouse Reserve with new buildings designed by the Government Architect, to plant it with trees and shrubs from the Sydney Botanic Gardens, and to connect every home with fresh water and sewerage. The State Government Tourist Bureau thought so highly of refurbished La Perouse it listed it with Bondi Beach among Sydney's recommended visiting spots for overseas tourists. In the 1950s, St Mary's Hostel for Aboriginal children at Alice Springs, located in a former wartime recreation centre for servicewomen, was another model of its kind that attracted busloads of tourists.

[30] Neville, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 3 May 1934, transcript of proceedings, p 604

[31] Anna Haebich, '"Between Knowing and Not Knowing": Public Knowledge of the Stolen Generations', *Aboriginal History*, 25, 2001, p 76

THE BEST-KEPT CONSPIRACY IN AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

On top of the awkward fact that the Aboriginal population grew strongly right through the whole period it was supposedly subject to genocide, there is another oddity about the Stolen Generations. Why did this not become a public issue before Peter Read emerged on the scene in 1981? If, as the Human Rights Commission claimed, its origins went back to 1910, why didn't earlier Aboriginal activists make a fuss? At the high point of Aboriginal radicalism in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the attempt to put an end to Aboriginality by removing children never received a mention in any major agenda of Aboriginal political grievances.

During the lead-up to the successful 1967 constitutional referendum to give the Commonwealth powers in Aboriginal affairs, not one of the political activists campaigning for reform mentioned stolen children as an issue to be rectified. In 1970, neither the ten-point Policy Manifesto of the National Tribal Council, nor the Platform and Program of the Black Panthers of Australia, nor the 1972 Five-Point Policy of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy at Parliament House, Canberra, or any other political manifesto of the time, mentioned stolen children, let alone the genocide that Aborigines had purportedly been suffering for the previous 60 years. Aboriginal activists of that era proved very adept at gaining attention from the news media and very capable of articulating their case. Black Panthers spokesmen included Gary Foley, later a university lecturer, Paul Coe, subsequently a barrister, and Dennis Walker, son of one of Australia's leading literary figures. They and their colleagues were politically astute enough to mount the Aboriginal Tent Embassy on the lawns of Parliament House — an inspired piece of political symbolism — yet could not recognize the genocide and child stealing taking place right beneath their noses.

A greater mystery is that some of the best-known of an earlier generation of Aboriginal activists had been in an even better position to see what was going on. In the 1940s and 1950s, William Ferguson, Walter Page and Pearl Gibbs actually served as directors of the Aborigines Welfare Board of New South Wales, one of the very organizations then purportedly committing genocide. Yet they never realized what was happening. Of all people, they were the ones who should have identified it first. How could they possibly have missed it? If the Stolen Generations story was true, then at that very time, right across Australia, in all states and territories, scores of white welfare officials, backed by parliamentarians and senior public servants, were forcibly removing Aboriginal children to put an end to Aboriginality. How did these hundreds of white people, for a period of more than 60 years, maintain the discipline needed to keep the

whole thing so quiet that Aboriginal activists like Ferguson, Page and Gibbs were oblivious to its existence? Why did no one leak the truth? A conspiracy on this scale must have been the best-kept secret in Australian history. On these grounds alone, the inherent implausibility of Read's thesis should always have been self-evident.

'THE CRIMINALS WHO ENACTED THE PROGRAMS'

In presenting a more realistic version of this story, part of my task includes reassessing the reputations of those who worked in the field in those years. We need to know whether the white people who determined Aboriginal policies in the past, and those who provided direct-contact services to Aborigines — welfare workers, missionaries and other members of religious orders, police officers, nurses and matrons in children's institutions, the managers of Aboriginal reserves and stations — deserve the status they now have. Historians today treat them as little better than the officers and guards at Belsen and Treblinka. They do this even though the historical record reveals some of the most influential of them emerged from humanitarian organizations, religious societies and political movements that had long worked in support of indigenous peoples. As Chapter Seven demonstrates, although historians have misrepresented the roles of the Chief Protectors A. O. Neville in Western Australia and Cecil Cook in the Northern Territory, their careers as administrators nonetheless leave little to admire. But it is a very different story with most of those employed in the front line caring for Aboriginal children. The determination of some historians to destroy the reputations of the latter people is contemptible.

Free from any risk of defamation suits from their now dead subjects, and speaking from the comfort of tenured university positions with six-figure salaries, academics such as Peter Read, Anna Haebich and Raimond Gaita have written of 'the criminals who enacted the programs'[32] and applied labels such as 'sinister', 'hated', 'monstrous' and 'psychopathic' to people like Emmeline Rutter, Ella Hiscocks, Sister Kate Clutterbuck, Sister Eileen Heath, Amelia Shankelton and Father Percy Smith who spent much of their adult lives under the same roofs and conditions as the orphaned, abandoned and unloved children they worked to save. Similarly, Colin Tatz, a professor of genocide studies, defamed the famous Aboriginal tenor, the late Harold Blair, by associating him with a scheme that ostensibly offered Aboriginal children Christmas holidays by the sea, but whose purported secret agenda was to adopt them into white families.

[32] Raimond Gaita, 'Genocide and Pedantry', *Quadrant*, July–August 1997, p 45

The Human Rights Commission's inquiry treated such people unjustly. As I show in several places in this book, the commission's public hearings declined to call as witnesses public officials and welfare workers who could have contradicted its predetermined conclusions. The commission only sought evidence that confirmed its prejudices. It only wanted to hear from those claiming to be stolen children and never gave their 'captors' the chance to answer the charges. Yet when some of the latter who were still living came before properly constituted court hearings, they easily disproved the accusations. This was particularly true in the Northern Territory, as Chapter Ten demonstrates in its discussion of the failed test case of Lorna Cubillo and Peter Gunner.

Some prominent Aboriginal people engaged in child welfare have been quietly airbrushed from history because their activities contradict the Stolen Generations thesis. One of them was Aunty Molly Mallett, a member of the Cape Barren Islander community descended from the Tasmanian Aborigines. As Chapter Eleven discusses, Mallett moved to Launceston where she provided government-approved foster care for orphaned and neglected Cape Barren Islander children. From the 1950s to the 1970s, she fostered so many she 'lost count'. Even though she had far more experience than anyone else in the plight of these half-caste children, the Human Rights Commission's inquiry never called her as a witness. *Bringing Them Home* declined to even mention her role, preferring its readers to believe the children were all placed with white families and in white institutions.

Many of the politicians who decided Aboriginal policy in the period of so-called genocide were anything but faceless. By far the greater number of them owed their allegiance to the 'progressive' or Left side of politics. One thing the university historians who established this story kept largely to themselves was that most of the legislation they condemned was passed by Labor governments. In New South Wales, the 1915 *Aborigines Protection Amending Act*, which allowed the Aborigines Protection Board to remove children without recourse to a hearing before a magistrate, was the work of the first Labor government in the state headed by James McGowen and W. A. Holman. The Act's 1943 amendment, which allowed Aboriginal children to be fostered out to non-indigenous families, was introduced by the Labor government of William McKell, one of his party's favourite sons who later became Governor-General. In Western Australia, A. O. Neville was appointed Chief Protector in 1915 by the state's first Labor government headed by John Scaddan. The 1936 Act that purportedly entrenched Neville's proposals for 'breeding out the colour' was the product of the Labor governments of Phillip Collier and John Willcock.

In contrast, when a proposal for 'breeding out the colour' was put to the conservative government of Joseph Lyons in 1933, it wanted nothing to do with it. As noted in the Preface, this proposal has been wrongly linked to the question of child removal when, in reality, it was wholly confined to controlling the marriage of adult Aborigines of part descent. As Chapter Seven records, the Lyons government treated it with disdain. In August 1934, the responsible minister, J. A. Perkins, told the parliament:

> It can be stated definitely, that it is and always has been, contrary to policy to force half-caste women to marry anyone. The half-caste must be a perfectly free agent in the matter.[33]

Not one of the historians of the Stolen Generations has ever quoted this statement. It disproved yet more of their claims about the genocidal objectives of Commonwealth government policies in the 1930s.

Some prominent radical political activists of earlier eras were complicit in policies and activities that historians and the Human Rights Commission now characterize as racist and genocidal. For instance, in the 1967 constitutional referendum, one of the leading campaigners for the 'yes' vote was Faith Bandler, then a familiar figure in radical and Communist Party circles. In January 2009, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd awarded Bandler Australia's highest civilian honour, the Companion of the Order of Australia, for her work on behalf of racial minorities. It is not widely known today but in 1959 Bandler adopted an abandoned 2-year-old Aboriginal boy into her non-indigenous family. She raised him until he was twelve. At the time, none of her Aboriginal political colleagues thought she was doing anything wrong. To accuse Bandler of committing a racial crime for this act, let alone being a party to genocide, would be absurd and offensive. We should offer the same presumption of innocence until proven guilty to everyone else who acted from similar motives, whatever their political background or racial origin.

When their track records are examined more closely, many of those white people engaged in Aboriginal affairs a century ago become unexpectedly familiar. They were the religious and political evangelicals of their time, determined to do good works for others in order to give meaning and substance to their own lives. They bear an uncomfortable resemblance to the white lawyers, academics, social workers, journalists and political activists who seek to do the same today. In other words, accusers and accused are the same kind of people. The big difference is that those charged with crimes against

[33] J. A. Perkins, Minister for the Interior, House of Representatives, Canberra, 2 August 1934

humanity actually did something tangible to improve Aboriginal lives. Their accusers have offered only bogus history, feigned compassion and empty symbolic gestures.

Today we inhabit a censorious age in which the present generation presumes it alone has wisdom and virtue. We pride ourselves on our moral and intellectual superiority to all the generations before us. We assume the right to condemn the past for not sharing our currently fashionable moral postures. Nonetheless, all those in the past responsible for Aboriginal policy and child welfare still deserve a proper hearing, with their names and reasons fully disclosed so we can judge the decisions they took in light of the prevailing attitudes and opportunities of the time, as well as what we know about their characters through the full record of their public lives.

Ultimately, however, it is the reputation of the nation that is at issue. Thanks to the determination of academic historians and state education curriculum boards, Australian schoolchildren have by now largely succumbed to the prevailing version of this story. Many have learnt to despise their own country for this episode and to be ashamed of the Australian past. Australians abroad are saddled with a reputation for racism comparable to white South Africans in the era of apartheid. Aboriginal people themselves are taught the arrival of the Europeans brought so much violence and heartbreak they should never allow themselves to be fully reconciled to Australian society.

The philosopher Raimond Gaita has claimed that, if the *Bringing Them Home* report is accurate, the case for genocide is over-determined.[34] My book argues that the only thing over-determined is the case *against* genocide. Not one of the major contentions made by the Human Rights Commission, or the bevy of academic historians upon whom it relied, stands up to scrutiny. *Bringing Them Home* is probably the most unreliable and deceptive public document ever produced in this country. Unfortunately, it has also been one of the most influential. It claimed to have uncovered a whole class of victims, children forcibly removed from loving parents whose lives were thereby ruined. In reality, the greater victims have been those generations of Aboriginal children who, thanks to the report's subsequent influence on social workers, child welfare officials and children's court magistrates, are now left too long in dysfunctional families for fear of creating a 'new' Stolen Generation. An historical fiction has created a real-life social catastrophe, whose appalling consequences are now verified by government and judicial enquiries, time after time.[35]

[34] Gaita, 'Genocide and Pedantry', p 41

[35] Australian Government Productivity Commission, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009*, Melbourne; Australian

BLACK AND WHITE PERSPECTIVES ON THE APOLOGY

> 'For the pain, suffering and hurt of these stolen generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry. To the mothers and fathers, the brothers and sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry.' Here was the word, used twice in two quick sentences by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, that everyone in those ranked, packed galleries had come to hear. There was, quite audibly, the exhalation of breath. That same release — the hope of an expulsion, really, of a national burden — could be felt across the country, in public gatherings before giant screens in places such as Melbourne's Federation Square and Sydney's Martin Place, to clubs and parks in small towns and school classrooms everywhere.
>
> — Tony Wright, *The Age*, Melbourne, 14 February 2008

For all the reasons given in this book, I believe the parliamentary apology by Prime Minister Rudd in February 2008 was indulgent and unwise. In the short term, of course, the massive and favourable media coverage made it a public relations success for him and his government. As I argued in the Preface, it satisfied the millions of suburban voters who have always had goodwill towards Aboriginal people, who wanted racial reconciliation and an end to bad feeling over this issue. But in describing Aboriginal child welfare policies of the past as the 'great stain' on the nation's soul, Rudd not only defamed a great many people from his own side of politics, but did no favour to Aborigines either. He added further fuel to the politics of permanent grievance on which the hard men of Aboriginal activism have long thrived. The apology confirmed Aboriginal peoples' core identity as victims of injustice rather than potential beneficiaries, like everyone else, of the prosperous, liberal, democratic, egalitarian society established here since 1788.

It is clear, however, that my views on the topic are very much in the minority, and are likely to remain so for some time. The above account from Tony Wright in *The Age* captured quite accurately the popular response. Throughout the country, there *was* a collective sigh of relief from the majority of white people at the discharge of what had felt like a national burden.

A small minority of whites, however, were anything but relieved. Among the members of Australia's intellectual culture, the failure of Rudd to use the term 'genocide' or to offer any reparations remained

Institute of Health and Welfare, *Child Protection Australia 2006–07*, Canberra, January 2008, pp 61–4; *Little Children Are Sacred: Report of the Northern Territory Board of Enquiry Into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse*, Darwin, April 2007

burning issues. The philosopher Raimond Gaita insisted that academics, journalists and lawyers would not drop their demands:

> Even if Kevin Rudd believes (as clearly he doesn't) that some of the Stolen Generations were victims of genocide, it would have been foolish for him to have said so on the day when he offered them a prime ministerial apology. It would have been unnecessarily offensive to many Australians who would understandably have been hurt as much as they would have been scandalized ...
>
> It is, however, inconceivable that Aborigines and their fellow Australians will stop thinking for long about which concepts are necessary to describe their past truthfully. Discussion of genocide will then be unavoidable. It would be a 'moral, intellectual and political disaster' if academics and others were to censor themselves because minds slam shut or to refuse to discuss outside academe whether the Aborigines were the victims of genocide.[36]

Even though this book disputes all Gaita's other interpretations of this topic, what he says here is true. The charge of genocide does hurt and does scandalize most Australians. And all those white academics, journalists and lawyers who have supported the accusation are determined to persist with it, no matter what.

Aboriginal political leaders initially greeted the apology with high emotion. The visitors' gallery of Parliament House was packed with Aboriginal identities, who gave the Prime Minister a standing ovation. Many, including Lowitja O'Donoghue, wept throughout his speech.

After the moment had passed, however, it is doubtful that the apology changed any Aboriginal minds at all. Later that morning, O'Donoghue and Aboriginal spokesman Patrick Dodson gave interviews to journalists calling for a more material response. According to *The Age*:

> Mr Dodson described the apology and Mr Rudd's speech as a watershed. 'The sincerity that he brought to that has moved many hearts of indigenous people across this country,' he said. But he added: 'Any group of people who have been treated badly under laws made legitimately by the Crown deserve to pursue compensation judicially, legally or politically and they deserve our support.'
>
> Ms O'Donoghue, while declaring herself 'very proud' of Mr Rudd for keeping his promise to apologize, also took issue with the Government over its refusal to compensate people taken from their families. And she warned that extra money to tackle indigenous disadvantage in areas such as health and education should not be a substitute for compensation.[37]

[36] Raimond Gaita, 'Sorry, but it's no Time for Minds to Slam Shut', *Australian Literary Review*, in *The Australian*, 7 May 2008, p 12

[37] Misha Schubert, *The Age*, 14 February 2008, p 1

Other Aboriginal activists treated the event with cynicism. Gary Foley, one of the radical identities of the 1970s and now a historian and lecturer in indigenous studies at Victoria University, was interviewed by the *Melbourne Historical Journal.*

> *How do you think the apology should be taught at universities?* I think it should be taught in Political Science classes as an example of the duplicity and deceit of politicians. And it should be taught in psychology classes in terms of how a nation appeases itself of its guilt. And it should be taught in drama school as a classic example of Australian political comedy. And it should be taught in driving school as a magnificent example of defensive driving and evasive tactics and manoeuvres. It should also be taught in kindergartens as a fairy tale.[38]

Meanwhile, out on the streets where Aboriginal people congregated, some young men had little time for irony:

> Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's national apology to the stolen generation has sparked a spate of racial violence in Darwin. Five people had to be admitted to hospital after one brawl. The Caucasian men were attacked by a group of 10 Aboriginal men, who demanded that their victims 'say sorry'. A 28-year-old Territory woman watched helplessly as her friend was king-hit and kicked to the ground outside a Darwin 24-hour eatery on Sunday morning. She said three men ran at them from across the road, when they looked at the group yelling at two women. 'They just started king-hitting him. They got him on the ground and then two others came over and started kicking him,' she said. 'They kept screaming that we were not sorry at all.'[39]

[38] 'Duplicity and Deceit: Gary Foley's Take on Rudd's Apology to the Stolen Generations', *Melbourne Historical Journal*, Volume 36, 2008

[39] Phoebe Stewart, *Northern Territory News*, Darwin, 20 February 2008

CHAPTER ONE

The invention of the Stolen Generations

IN 1997, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission made the most notorious accusation ever directed by a government body against Australia. It accused this country of committing genocide against the Aborigines by stealing their children. According to the commission's report, *Bringing Them Home*, state officials ripped from the arms of loving parents several generations of Aboriginal children in order to raise them in institutions or with white families. From about 1910 until at least 1970, the intention of governments and Aboriginal welfare officials was to assimilate them into white society and, by controlling who they associated with and married, to eventually 'breed out the colour' and thus rid Australia of its Aboriginal people. It was allegedly a racist policy derived from the theory of eugenics that flourished in Nazi Germany. The report's two principal authors, Ronald Wilson and Mick Dodson, the commission's chairman and social justice commissioner, declared:

> Nationally we can conclude with confidence that between one in three and one in ten Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families and communities in the period from approximately 1910 until 1970. In certain regions and in certain periods the figure was undoubtedly much greater than one in ten. In that time not one Indigenous family has escaped the effects of forcible removal.[1]

[1] Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children From Their Families*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, April 1997, p 37

As could be expected, the report was a media sensation. Its higher estimate that one in three Aboriginal children had been forcibly removed gained most public exposure. Dodson himself assured the news media that this amounted to 100,000 stolen children. If the same ratio of removal — one in three — had been applied to the white Australian population, Dodson argued, the total number of children taken would have been six million — a patent allusion to the number of Jews killed by the Nazis.[2]

On the critical question of why Aboriginal children were removed in such numbers, the authors of *Bringing Them Home* endorsed the explanation given by the historian Peter Read in his 1981 pamphlet *The Stolen Generations* that the principal reason children were removed was to separate them permanently from the rest of their race. They quoted Read verbatim:

> No court hearings were necessary; the manager of an Aboriginal station, or a policeman on a reserve or in a town, might simply order them removed. The racial intention was obvious enough for all prepared to see, and some managers cut a long story short when they came to that part of the committal notice 'Reason for Board taking control of the child'. They simply wrote 'for being Aboriginal'.[3]

Bringing Them Home claimed some aspects of this policy continued even into the 1970s and 1980s, that is, it was operative under the Whitlam, Fraser and Hawke governments, all of which appointed ministers apparently sympathetic to the Aboriginal cause but which nonetheless administered a policy that amounted to genocide. The report's authors were at pains to point out that genocide had been a crime under international law at least since 1948 when the UN General Assembly declared it so, and that the various ministers responsible should have realized this.

> The continuation into the 1970s and 1980s of the practice of preferring non-Indigenous foster and adoptive families for Indigenous children was also arguably genocidal. The genocidal impact of these practices was reasonably foreseeable ... The policy of forcible removal of children from Indigenous Australians to other groups for the purpose of raising them separately from and ignorant of their culture and people could properly be labelled 'genocidal' in breach of binding international law from at least 11

[2] He said this on the ABC program *PM*: see Ron Brunton, 'Foster or Fester', *The Weekend Australian*, 12–13 October, 1996

[3] *Bringing Them Home*, p 41, quoting Peter Read, *The Stolen Generations: The Removal of Aboriginal Children in New South Wales 1883 to 1969*, NSW Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, Sydney, Occasional Paper No. 1, Sydney, 1981, p 6

> December 1946 (confirmed by Justice Brennan in *Polyukovich* 1991 page 587). The practice continued for almost another quarter of a century.[4]

Let us be clear about the principal charge being made here: children were forcibly removed from indigenous Australians to other groups for the immediate purpose of raising them separately from and ignorant of their culture and people, and for the ultimate purposes of suppressing any distinct Aboriginal culture and ending the existence of the Aborigines as a distinct people. Or as Peter Read later encapsulated the accusation: 'welfare officers, removing children solely because they were Aboriginal, intended and arranged that they should lose their Aboriginality, and that they never return home.'[5]

Immediately it was published, *Bringing Them Home* was greeted with acclaim by the majority of the news media and by Australia's political and intellectual classes. Apart from the Howard government and a handful of conservative newspaper columnists and radio talkback commentators, who were conspicuous by their dissent, most took the report to heart. In Canberra, the Leader of the Opposition, Labor's Kim Beazley, told the federal parliament that he read the report and wept. One of Australia's most feted academic philosophers, Raimond Gaita, strongly endorsed the report's findings. There can be little doubt, Gaita said, that genocide was the motive of at least many of the government officials who devised and administered the programs. 'That is because they believed pure-blood Aborigines were destined for extinction and, at least until the 1950s, they took half-caste children to ensure that the race disappeared.' These officials, Gaita claimed, knew full well what they were doing.

> Sometimes they justified their programs by biological theories, sometimes by other theories, but a genocidal intention — which included other intentions — remained constant. In fact the verdict of genocide is over-determined. The report lists five acts that count as genocidal when they are 'committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group as such', and it appears that the state officials guilty of genocide often committed three of them. Only if the authors of *Bringing Them Home* or their informants were lying on a grand scale could one doubt the report's conclusion.'[6]

Genocide is clearly the most terrible crime it is possible to commit. Strangely, though, *Bringing Them Home* did not call for the arrest of

[4] *Bringing Them Home*, pp 274–5

[5] Peter Read, 'Clio or Janus? Historians and the Stolen Generations', *Australian Historical Studies*, 33, 118, 2002, p 57

[6] Raimond Gaita, 'Genocide and Pedantry', *Quadrant*, July–August 1997, p 41; also in Raimond Gaita, *A Common Humanity*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 1999, pp 127–8

any of the then still-living former Commonwealth ministers for Aboriginal affairs — Peter Howson, Billy Wentworth, Les Johnson, Ian Viner, Fred Chaney, Peter Baume, Clyde Holding or Gerry Hand — who were directly responsible over the final two decades when the policy remained 'arguably genocidal'. Nor did the report call for the criminal indictment of any of the comparable ministers from the various state and territory governments who were equally responsible. At no time since has the Human Rights Commission urged that any of these people be put on trial in Australia or extradited to the International Criminal Court in The Hague to stand alongside other political leaders accused of the same thing, such as former Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic.

Although it quoted from the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide, *Bringing Them Home* completely ignored Articles 3 and 4 of that convention:

> Article 3. The following acts shall be punishable: (a) Genocide; (b) Conspiracy to commit genocide; (c) Direct and public incitement to commit genocide; (d) Attempt to commit genocide; (e) Complicity in genocide.
>
> Article 4. Persons committing genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in Article 3 shall be punished, whether they are constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials or private individuals.

Nor did it make any mention of a further paragraph:

> Article 6. Persons charged with genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in Article 3 shall be tried by a competent tribunal of the State in the territory of which the act was committed, or by such international penal tribunal as may have jurisdiction with respect to those Contracting Parties which shall have accepted its jurisdiction.

Indeed, the indignation of the report's accusation was not matched by a demand for the perpetrators to be prosecuted or punished in any way at all.

This surely should have indicated to everyone that Wilson and Dodson did not genuinely 'conclude with confidence' that their findings were sound. By 2001, Wilson himself expressed some misgivings about his use of the term genocide, not because he disagreed with it but because it aroused too much opposition. Even though he devoted six pages of his report to the legal implications of the 1948 UN Convention,[7] Wilson now tried to downplay its legal status. He told journalist Patrick Carlyon that his inquiry had never been intended to serve as a royal commission. It heard 'stories' rather than testimony and listened to 'storytellers' rather than witnesses.[8] But

[7] *Bringing Them Home*, pp 270–5

[8] Patrick Carlyon, 'White Lies', *The Bulletin*, 12 June 2001, p 27

most public commentators have remained oblivious to his reluctance to punish the perpetrators. One of the few to express surprise that the culprits were not put on trial was Raimond Gaita:

> Indeed, the most puzzling aspect of the report's reception is that (as far as I know) no-one who has broadly accepted the facts it records and its conclusion that genocide was committed, has proposed that there be criminal trials to determine who is guilty and to punish them ... How can you think genocide always to be a serious crime, yet find it unthinkable to call for criminal proceedings?

Despite these misgivings, Gaita himself justified the lack of action on grounds of political pragmatism. Such trials, he claimed, would only generate a 'vicious backlash against the Aborigines'. That in itself, he said, was sufficient reason not to conduct them. This was a peculiar position for a moral philosopher to adopt: don't bring offenders to trial if it will generate animosity against their victims. It was justified, Gaita said, because few Australians were fully aware of the nature of the crimes committed against the Aborigines. He hoped public opinion might eventually change. 'If it becomes fully appreciated, as I hope it will, then it is hard to see how people will be able to resist the natural thought that the criminals who enacted the programs when the genocidal intention was firm should be brought to justice.'[9] In other words, only bring criminals to justice once public opinion is on your side.

Instead of calling for the perpetrators to be arrested, *Bringing Them Home* wanted the government to apologize to the Aborigines and give them money. It recommended the creation of a national compensation fund to make a minimum lump sum payment to all those removed from their families by 'compulsion, duress or undue influence'. It wanted the board that handed out these lump sums to be composed of a majority of Aborigines, to be chaired by an Aborigine, to decide eligibility on the balance of probabilities, and not to be bound by the rules of evidence.[10]

The claimants for compensation were not to be limited to those who were removed as children. Rather, reparations were to be also made 'to all who suffered because of forcible removal policies' including the family members of those removed, the communities of those removed who suffered 'cultural and community disintegration', plus all the descendants of those removed who were thereby 'deprived of community ties, culture and language, and links with and entitlements to their traditional land'.[11] Given the report's claim that

[9] Gaita, 'Genocide and Pedantry', p 45
[10] *Bringing The Home*, pp 309–13
[11] *Bringing Them Home*, p 283

'not one Indigenous family has escaped the effects of forcible removal', it was recommending that virtually every person in Australia who claimed to be an Aborigine was entitled to a substantial cash handout for compensation and reparation.

The Human Rights Commission made no pretence that its investigation was objective or impartial. It appointed Aboriginal people who had vested interests in the outcome as both Inquiry Commissioners and members of its Indigenous Advisory Council.[12] One Inquiry Commissioner was Annette Peardon of Tasmania who was eventually awarded $58,000 by the Tasmanian government for allegedly being a stolen child (even though in the period investigated, Tasmania never had any legislation or organization that targeted Aboriginal children for removal).[13] A member of the inquiry's Indigenous Advisory Council was Barbara Cummings, one of the organizers of a 1994 conference in Darwin that launched the two principal legal actions against the Commonwealth Government for compensation for stolen children, *Kruger v. Commonwealth; Bray v. Commonwealth*, and *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*. Although it was not a royal commission, an inquiry of this kind by a Commonwealth instrumentality should have protected its credibility by maintaining at least a semblance of independence.

In August 2007, the South Australian Supreme Court established a benchmark of how much the payout to stolen children should be. It awarded Bruce Trevorrow $525,000 for unlawful treatment when removed from his mother's care in 1957.[14] Yet when new Labor Prime Minister Kevin Rudd made his apology to the Stolen Generations in the House of Representatives in February 2008, he ignored both *Bringing Them Home* and the Trevorrow case and made no offer of monetary compensation at all. He reduced the apology to a symbolic gesture and did not acknowledge the charge of genocide. Had he taken the advice of the Human Rights Commission and compensated every indigenous family for their pain, then, using the Trevorrow verdict as benchmark, the payout to Australia's approximately 100,000 Aboriginal families would have been around $50

[12] *Bringing Them Home*, p 671

[13] See Chapter Eleven

[14] Trevorrow had been admitted to Adelaide Children's Hospital with diarrhoea and dehydration. A paediatrician diagnosed him as suffering malnutrition. He was subsequently fostered out to another family, even though the welfare officer responsible did not have the legal authority to do this. When his natural mother eventually enquired after him, she was misled about his whereabouts. The Trevorrow case was Australia's first and only successful Stolen Generations court claim: 'Stolen Generation Payout', *The Age*, 2 August 2007

billion. Even though he failed to offer the stolen children any money, Rudd's apology was a personal triumph. The saturation media coverage of the parliamentary ceremony rewarded him with record approval ratings. For literally no cost, he bought into a story that had long been a favourite of most of the Australian news media.

SELLING THE STORY TO THE NEWS MEDIA

Some years after *Bringing Them Home* was published in 1997, Ronald Wilson excused himself for not having called as witnesses any of those responsible for the policy. He pleaded insufficient funds in his budget.[15] However, at the time, he could afford to employ a full-time media officer for twelve months to publicize hearings to indigenous and non-indigenous communities[16] and still find enough money to employ public relations consultants to gain maximum exposure for his report in the news media. To sell its story to the public, the Human Rights Commission mounted one of the most successful public relations campaigns in recent Australian history. Indeed, it was so proud of its media exploits it found even more public money to employ another media consultant to survey the coverage and analyse its impact. This second project, which was funded by the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and conducted by Mervyn Smythe and Associates, produced two 100-page reports that were published in June 1998.[17]

The *Bringing Them Home* report was tabled in federal parliament on 26 May 1997. In terms of both convention and protocol, this would normally have been the first public airing of a report of this kind. However, more than a week before, the Human Rights Commission leaked copies to all major newspapers and gave special briefings to reporters known to be sympathetic to its cause. This strategy worked remarkably well. In anticipation of the official tabling, press coverage began on the front pages of most newspapers on 20 and 21 May.

For the next week the Human Rights Commission had public commentary all on its side. There was no chance for sceptics or critics to question or challenge its findings because no one outside the press had a copy of the report. Most politicians had to wait for it to be tabled in parliament. In this period, media coverage was overwhelmingly favourable to the report and set an agenda that was never derailed.

[15] Patrick Carlyon, 'White Lies', *The Bulletin*, 12 June 2001, p 27
[16] *Bringing Them Home*, p 671
[17] Mervyn Smythe and Associates, *An Analysis of the Media Coverage of Bringing Them Home, Volume 1: Analysis and Summary Data; Volume 2: Extracts from Newspaper Coverage*, June 1998

To flesh out claims of from 30,000 to 100,000 children stolen from their families, newspapers presented sympathetic case studies of stolen children accompanied by comments from people, including tennis champion Evonne Goolagong, agreeing with the findings. In *The Australian*, supporting material included the story of a German concentration camp survivor. Under the heading 'Auschwitz child shares pain of stolen generation', the inquiry's assertion of genocide was reinforced. The report was covered not only in the news and opinion pages but cropped up in several other contexts, including features on art exhibitions and reviews of television programs. Even the computer supplement of *The Australian* ran a story under the heading 'Your chance to say you're sorry', telling readers of a website that allowed people to record individual apologies.

All newspapers carried editorials on the topic, often more than one. 'All agreed', according to the analysis by Mervyn Smythe, 'that the assimilation policies were a blot on Australia's past, virtually all called for a formal apology, and most were critical of the Prime Minister when he gave only a personal apology at the Reconciliation Convention.' The question of John Howard's refusal to give a formal apology produced a series of editorial admonitions:

> As the nation shares the shame, an apology from the Prime Minister would also be appropriate — *The Australian*.
>
> The mealy-mouthed and vague expressions of regret also add to the burden the victims still bear — *Canberra Times*.
>
> There is little to be lost from issuing an unconditional national apology — *Australian Financial Review*.
>
> It would be a marvellous act, a sign of true white concern rather than mean spirit, if the Parliament of Australia could find the words to frame an apology for those deeds — *Advertiser*, Adelaide.

Only a minority of the press gave anything less than full support. The *Daily Telegraph*, Sydney, and the *Herald Sun*, Melbourne, thought Howard had done enough in a speech to the Reconciliation Convention where he expressed his personal sorrow instead of giving an official apology. 'Many more Australians outside that venue,' said the *Telegraph*, 'will applaud his commonsense commitment to real change and disregard superficial gestures.' Some newspapers also had concerns about the word 'genocide' and with the idea of giving monetary compensation. However, according to Mervyn Smythe, a great many of the 85 articles published in newspaper opinion pieces and commentary pages strongly supported those elements of the report.

In the first month of coverage, the report attracted the equivalent of 68 full pages of text in ten newspapers. The value of this coverage in the press was equal to advertising expenditure of $1.5 million. On

television the equivalent of the news coverage was worth $9 million, and on radio the equivalent of $1.5 million. In the twelve months following May 1997, Mervyn Smythe estimated the total coverage on all three media was worth an advertising equivalent of $18 million.

Most importantly, the coverage fulfilled the Human Rights Commission's overall public relations strategy of persuading most of the media to treat the conclusions of the report as proven rather than controversial or open to question. It also realized another of the authors' goals of making the terms 'stolen children' and 'stolen generations' instantly understood by most Australians. Mervyn Smythe concluded:

> In terms of the content of the report's coverage, for that part which we have been able to analyse, the coverage has been on the whole extremely favourable whether examined in terms of the directly expressed attitudes shown in the editorial and comment/opinion sections of the newspapers or those more indirectly reflected in the news/feature sections. Despite comments by some Government figures, and a few media commentators, the coverage of the report has reflected a situation in which its findings have been seen by most writers/editors as having been proved as opposed to being still open to question.[18]

The Howard government, however, refused to agree to any compensation or reparation, or even to apologize. To the continuing scorn of all the report's supporters, including a significant number of Howard's own backbenchers, the government questioned the very notion of the Stolen Generations. In April 2000, a submission to a Senate enquiry by Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Senator John Herron, disputed both words in the term. Children had not been stolen, he said. The removal of children was 'lawful and benign in intent' and at no time amounted to anything like one whole generation, since no more than 10 per cent of children were ever separated.[19]

A little later, Federal Court Judge Maurice O'Loughlin (himself a former barrister on the pro-Aboriginal side) found in the first test case against the Commonwealth that neither of the two claimants for damages, Peter Gunner and Laura Cubillo, could establish they were stolen children. Nor could he find any evidence of a systematic policy of forcible removal of Aboriginal children on the basis of their race.[20] Much of the media, however, reported this not as a defeat but as an

[18] Mervyn Smythe and Associates, *Analysis of the Media Coverage of Bringing Them Home*, Volume 1, p viii

[19] Submission by the Federal Government to Senate Legal and Constitutional References Committee, 'Inquiry into the Stolen Generation', March 2000

[20] *Cubillo versus Commonwealth* (2000) Federal Court of Australia, FCA 1084, April 2000

obstacle that only steeled the claimants' resolve. Some of the press portrayed the verdict merely as a temporary setback: 'We'll fight on, vow stolen children', 'Matter far from over, say blacks', 'Legal win "does not deny stolen generation"', 'Stolen generation cases fail but more will follow', to list only those headlines published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*.[21] Despite its opposition to their demands, the Howard government funded the claimants' original case and their appeal all the way to the High Court, where it again failed.[22]

INTELLECTUALS, OLD MARXISTS AND THE HOLOCAUST

Since 1997, the most trenchant denunciations of Australia's role in the removal of children came from academics and intellectuals. Rather than remaining circumspect or judicious, the academics endorsed the highest estimates of the numbers said to have been removed, and they painted the policy in the most loathsome terms possible. In an article for the *Times Literary Supplement*, the Melbourne political scientist Judith Brett endorsed Dodson's figure of 100,000 stolen children, and Colin Tatz did the same in his booklet *Genocide in Australia*.[23] Academics quickly drew parallels with the Holocaust of World War II. Raimond Gaita wrote:

> Many people were irritated by the claim in the Human Rights Commission's report on the stolen children, *Bringing Them Home*, that some Australian State administrations had been guilty of genocide against our indigenous peoples. I confess I was ... The Holocaust was my paradigm of genocide. I defined other forms of genocide, such as the mass murders in Rwanda and Bosnia, against it. But while reading the stolen children report, I became ashamed of my irritation. *Bringing Them Home* argues carefully that according to the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, some State administrators of Aboriginal affairs were guilty of genocide. The facts it records support that conclusion.[24]

Among academic historians, the same analogy was deployed. Peter Read used the journal *Australian Historical Studies* to reply to those who questioned the veracity of his thesis. To put the critics in their

[21] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4–5 May 2002, p 9; Paul Sheehan, *The Electronic Whorehouse*, Macmillan, Sydney, 2003, p 192

[22] *Cubillo versus Commonwealth* (2001), High Court of Australia, D10/2001, 3 May 2002

[23] Judith Brett, 'Every Morning as the Sun Came Up: The Enduring Pain of the "Stolen Generation"', *Times Literary Supplement*, 3 October 1997, p 4; Colin Tatz, *Genocide in Australia*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Research Discussion Paper number 8, Canberra, 1999, p 29

[24] Raimond Gaita, 'Peace Crimes', *Weekend Australian*, 5 July 1997, p 24

place, he opened his essay with what he clearly thought the *most* powerful historical parallel of them all:

> The big truth about the Holocaust is that six million Jews perished during World War II at the hands of the Nazi oppressors. In the forty years since the appearance of Leon Uris' *Exodus* few historians, David Irving notwithstanding, have seriously challenged the standard account, which I am going to call here 'the big truth'. The local variations, what we could call 'smaller truths', began a decade or more later — of heroism, of betrayals, of Germans who protected Jews, of ethnic, local and regional variations — but the parameters of the larger story have remained almost entirely unchanged ... During the 1980s, the parameters of the large truth of the stolen generations — that large numbers of Aboriginal children were removed from their communities partly to desocialize them as Aboriginals — were also established, like the truth about Aboriginal dispossession.[25]

Read was also the principal author of a book based on the submission by the Link-Up organization to the Human Rights Commission inquiry. He compared the tactics used by the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Board to those deployed by the Nazis:

> The threat of taking children was deliberately used by the Board to control the behaviour of Aboriginal parents and other adults. As Bruno Bettelheim pointed out in his analysis of Nazi tactics during the Holocaust, terror is one of the most effective means of controlling an entire group and it relies upon making an example of only a few people (Bettelheim 1989). The Board deliberately threatened child removal because it was aware of how deeply we value our children, and that we would do much to avoid losing them.[26]

Paul Bartrop of Deakin University directly compared the Stolen Generations to the Jews under Hitler. For good measure, he added that, although Australia accepted an increasing number of Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany in the late 1930s, the fact that we did not take *all* who applied indicated how racist this country was.[27]

> It did not involve killing, but its ultimate objective was the same as Hitler's was for the Jews; namely, that at the end of the process the target group would have disappeared from the face of the earth. For part of the time the Australian case occurred concurrently with that of the Nazis, and there was a measure of overlap between the two as fugitives from the Nazis sought refuge in Australia. Having to work through the same department that determined the fate of Aborigines at the Federal level,

[25] Peter Read, 'Clio or Janus?' pp 54–5

[26] Link-Up (NSW) and Tikka Jan Wilson, *In the Best Interest of the Child? Stolen Children: Aboriginal Pain/White Shame*, Aboriginal History Monograph 4, Australian National University, Canberra, 1997

[27] Bartrop declined to mention that Australia's 5000 annual quota was at the time one of the highest per capita intakes of Jewish refugees in the world.

> refugee Jews from Hitler's Germany were restricted in their opportunities to enter Australia, and for largely the same reasons as Aboriginal children were being stolen from their families: as objects in the quest for racial and cultural assimilation.[28]

Another academic historian Dirk Moses took umbrage at those who thought this comparison too extreme. He wrote:

> I suppose the Nazis argued that they took the children for their own good. It was precisely because of such policies that Raphael Lemkin, Pole and Jew, wanted to include the provision about child removal in international law. I don't think it is vacuous moralism to point to the discursive and policy parallels between the Australian and German cases.[29]

The allusion here to the Nazis taking children is to one of the most unspeakable acts of World War II when, from 1940 to 1943 during the German occupation of Poland, the SS *Lebensborn* or 'Fountain of Life' organization abducted tens of thousands of blonde-haired, blue-eyed infants. At first they were taken from orphanages but later were simply snatched from the streets. They were taken to 'racial testing stations' where they were examined and measured. Those of sufficiently Germanic appearance were sent to one of several *Kinderlarger* or 'child camps', from where they were despatched to adopting families in Germany to 'improve' the Aryan racial stock. Those who failed the racial test were initially sent back to the orphanages but later were either killed on the spot or put aboard the trains to the concentration camps.[30]

Some of those who entered this debate were much less concerned with Aboriginal children than with continuing the Marxist critique of liberal-democratic society by other means. For more than a decade, a number of the old Marxists who hold prominent positions in Australian university history departments have tried to argue that, far from being a universalist doctrine that regards all people as equals, liberalism is 'exclusionist' when it comes to race. According to the Marxist-feminist historian Ann Curthoys of the Australian National University, liberalism only applies to homogenous ethnic groups within a nation state. This kind of exclusionism arose not in spite of liberal democracy, Curthoys argues, but was integral to it. Those who did not or could not share its values threatened the existence of a

[28] Paul R. Bartrop, 'The Holocaust, the Aborigines, and the Bureaucracy of Destruction: An Australian Dimension of Genocide', *Journal of Genocide Research*, *3*, 1, 2001, pp 84–5

[29] Dirk Moses, 'Blood Curdling', *The Australian's Review of Books*, June 2001, p 5

[30] Norman Davies, *No Simple Victory: World War II in Europe, 1939–1945*, Viking, New York, 2007, pp 323–4

liberal regime.[31] The historian of the Communist Party of Australia, Alastair Davidson, took a similar line, claiming John Stuart Mill in support.[32]

Sociologist Robert van Krieken used the Stolen Generations to extend this analysis. He claimed these children constituted yet another example of how close liberal democracy was to totalitarianism. 'Individualistic liberalism has a strongly normalizing edge to it, which can ... have effects very similar to more authoritarian regimes based on quite different political philosophies.' Van Krieken has argued that the Stolen Generations confirmed the theories of Polish Marxist and postmodernist theorist, Zygmunt Bauman, who claimed the modern liberal state only pretended to be tolerant of difference but, instead, harboured an authoritarian 'assimilatory project'. Citing Bauman, van Krieken wrote:

> It was part and parcel of the process of dismantling older, deeply rooted forms of communal life which provided alternative, sometimes oppositions frameworks of social power ... The price to be paid by individuals for entry to liberal citizenship in the modern state, at least in its juridical form, has always been to leave all their previous communal cultural identities behind, apart perhaps from some remnant in the form of quaint customs wheeled out at ceremonial occasions.[33]

Van Krieken's anti-liberal writings about children and the state are among the works that contributed to the Human Rights Commission's deliberations in *Bringing Them Home*.[34]

In Australia, the intellectual debate over the stolen children has continued to generate enmities that are unlikely to end soon. The political commentator Robert Manne has remained one of the principal protagonists. He too has used the Holocaust analogy,

[31] Ann Curthoys, 'Liberalism and Exclusionism: A Prehistory of the White Australia Policy', in Laksiri Jayasuriya, David Walker and Jan Gothard, eds, *Legacies of White Australia: Race, Culture and Nation*, University of Western Australia Press, Perth, 2003. Curthoys supported her case with the writings of fellow Australian National University historian, Barry Hindess, a one-time advocate of French Communist Party theorist Louis Althusser, who later switched his allegiance to the French postmodernist theorist Michel Foucault: Barry Hindess, 'Not at Home in the Empire', *Social Identities*, 7, 3, 2001

[32] Alaistair Davidson, 'The Politics of Exclusion in an Era of Globalization', in Jayasuriya, Walker and Gothard, eds, *Legacies of White Australia*, p 132

[33] Robert van Krieken, 'The "Stolen Generations" and Cultural Genocide: The Forced Removal of Australian Indigenous Children From Their Families and its Implications for the Sociology of Childhood', *Childhood*, 6, 3, August 1999

[34] *Bringing Them Home*, p 688

arguing: 'the term "stolen generations" had become for Aboriginal Australians what the term Holocaust was for the Jews — a way of referring, in a kind of moral shorthand, to a common and collective tragedy.' He also accused those who criticized the *Bringing Them Home* report, especially the journal *Quadrant* under editor Paddy McGuinness, of descending to the level of the most notorious Holocaust denier: '*Quadrant* has moved from the promise of "genuine debate" on Aboriginal policy to the reality of atrocity denialism in the David Irving mode.'[35] In 1998 Manne engaged in a highly publicised and acrimonious stoush with anthropologist Ron Brunton, then the report's major critic.[36] In 2006, Manne was in another very public and vitriolic tussle, this time with *Herald Sun* journalist Andrew Bolt. In both the press and the Melbourne Writers' Festival, Bolt repeatedly challenged Manne to provide the names of just ten children who had been forcibly removed for racist reasons. This proved a challenge Manne was unable to meet.[37] The controversy has been so abrasive it has remained very hard for those following it to remain indifferent. But to understand the central issues, it is more revealing to begin with its originator.

PETER READ AND THE STOLEN GENERATIONS

The historian Peter Read first used the term 'stolen generations' in 1981. He made it the title of a brief, 21-page pamphlet he wrote for the New South Wales Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs. The full title was: *The Stolen Generations: The Removal of Aboriginal Children in New South Wales 1883 to 1969*. When he prepared the work, Read was a postgraduate student at the Australian National University but, rather than a disinterested piece of scholarship, it was firmly in the mould of the advocacy research — or what Henry Reynolds has called 'politically utilitarian history' — that erupted at that time. The year before, Read had co-founded a social work agency called Link-Up, which aimed to reunite Aboriginal people who had been separated from

[35] Robert Manne, *In Denial: The Stolen Generations and the Right*, The Australian Quarterly Essay, 1, Schwartz Publishing, Melbourne, 2001, pp 59, 82–3

[36] Robert Manne, 'The Stolen Generations', *Quadrant*, February 1998; Manne, *In Denial*; Ron Brunton, *Betraying the Victims: The Stolen Generations' Report*, Institute of Public Affairs, Melbourne, February 1998; Ron Brunton, 'Correspondence', *Quarterly Essay*, 2, 2001; Ron Brunton, *Correcting the False Scholarship Syndrome*, Institute of Public Affairs, Melbourne, 2001

[37] Andrew Bolt, 'Stolen Generations: My Melbourne Writers Festival Speech', Andrew Bolt Blog, *Herald-Sun*, Melbourne, 5 September 2006; Robert Manne, *The Age*, 9 September 2006; Andrew Bolt, 'Fisking Manne's Column', Andrew Bolt Blog, *Herald-Sun*, 9 September 2006

their families and institutionalized. His pamphlet emerged, Read said, from his interviews with Aboriginal people about their experiences with the welfare system and in children's homes, as well as his own research in the New South Wales State Archives into the remaining records of the Aborigines Protection Board and Aborigines Welfare Board.[38]

Read's pamphlet accused these authorities of 'attempted genocide' in their policy to remove Aboriginal children from their parents. 'Genocide does not simply mean the extermination of people by violence but may include any means at all,' he wrote. 'At the height of the policy of separating Aboriginal people from their parents the Aborigines Welfare Board meant to do just that.' As evidence of the desire of the welfare authorities in New South Wales for the 'extermination' of the Aborigines, Read quoted from the board's 1921 report, which said: 'the continuation of this policy of dissociating the children from camp life must eventually solve the Aboriginal problem'.[39] There are two terms Read uses here — 'camp life' and 'the Aboriginal problem' — which require elaboration.

By 'camp life', the board meant the way of life on the 147 reserves established by the colonial government across rural New South Wales between 1860 and 1904, plus the 20 Aboriginal 'stations' set up by the Aborigines Protection Board between 1893 and 1915.[40] In the late nineteenth century, the great majority of the state's Aboriginal population was economically independent and made their living through a combination of agricultural and pastoral employment, hunting and fishing. Government-established reserves and stations were originally sites of welfare services, providing handouts of food and clothing to poor and unemployed Aborigines. In 1910, about 20 per cent of New South Wales Aborigines were receiving some kind of aid from them.[41]

An Aboriginal station was the secular equivalent of the old missions and was, in effect, a small village. Some still employed missionaries as managers or religious instructors. They provided rations, housing and

[38] Read, *The Stolen Generations*, p 21. When discussing the 1920s, Read called the authority the Aborigines Welfare Board. From 1883 to 1939, it was called the Aborigines Protection Board. It was renamed the Aborigines Welfare Board in 1940, a name it kept until its final meeting in April 1969.

[39] Read, *Stolen Generations*, p 2

[40] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1904*, p 3, in *Votes and Proceedings of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly*, 1901; *Report, 1915*, Appendix C, p 16, in *Joint Parliamentary Papers of the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council of New South Wales*, 1916

[41] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1910*, Census in Appendix B, Aid Recipients in Appendix D, pp 16–21

schooling to Aboriginal families who voluntarily came in to live there. A station had a white manager and a matron. Until 1915, stations were overseen by local committees of white citizens. After that date, all management was vested in the board secretariat in Sydney, advised by inspectors it employed to visit the stations periodically. Stations had populations of from about 50 up to 200 people.

An Aboriginal reserve was a place where land was set aside for Aborigines to live in tents and shacks and, if they chose, to grow food and crops. Unlike a station, a reserve did not have its own manager. Instead, the nearest local police officer was responsible for supervising the reserve and handing out rations. Some reserves, however, had a government-appointed 'matron' who performed the same functions and also provided some health care and advice. The population of some reserves was itinerant and ranged from one or two extended families to shifting communities of up to 100 people.

The term 'the Aboriginal problem' was an issue for which Read's pamphlet provided its own explanation. What the board meant by this, Read said, were the many 'Aboriginal people who could not, or chose not, to live as white people wanted them to do'. Read reproduced an extract from the board's 1911 report to confirm what it meant:

> to allow these children to remain on the Reserve to grow up in comparative idleness in the midst of more or less vicious surroundings would be, to say the least, an injustice to the children themselves, and a positive menace to the State.[42]

It took the Aborigines Protection Board 32 years before it had the power to remove Aboriginal children as it wished. Founded in 1883 as a non-statutory body composed of colonial politicians and public servants, the board could initially only remove children to institutions or foster homes under existing child welfare laws that applied equally to white children. After the Aborigines Protection Act of 1909, the board still had to put a case before a magistrate to remove children on grounds of neglect. Read said that the board found the powers it gained under this act inadequate. Magistrates would not always comply with their wishes. If children appeared well fed and well dressed, magistrates would refuse to declare them neglected, no matter what their circumstances. So board members lobbied the government to give them more power.

They were rewarded in 1915 by an amendment to the Act that gave them the right to remove any Aboriginal child without parental consent if the board considered it to be in the interest of the child's

[42] quoted by Read, *Stolen Generations*, p 7

moral or physical welfare.[43] Aboriginal parents, Read wrote, thereby lost their rights to their own children.

> It was up to the parents to show that the child had a right to be with them, not the other way round. No court hearings were necessary; the manager of an Aboriginal station, or a policeman on a reserve or in a town might simply order them removed. The racial intention was obvious enough for all prepared to see, and some managers cut a long story short when they came to that part of the committal notice, 'Reason for Board taking control of the child'. They simply wrote, 'for being Aboriginal'.[44]

The overall process began in 1893, Read claimed, when the Aborigines Protection Board built a dormitory for girls at the Warangesda Aboriginal Station on the Murrumbidgee River. He said its plan was for girls from all over New South Wales to live there while they were taught skills for domestic service. However, the board had no legal power to remove them from their parents, so over the next fifteen years the board could only place 300 girls in this institution.[45]

In 1911, the system became more institutionalized and coercive, Read said, when the board established the Cootamundra Girls' Home. This was an institution for Aboriginal girls who were removed at too young an age to go straight into employment. They were still to be trained for positions as domestic servants. In 1924, the board established the Kinchela Boys' Home on existing Aboriginal-farmed land on the Macleay River, near Kempsey, to train boys for jobs as farm labourers. It also established the Bomaderry Aboriginal Children's Home, near Nowra, for babies and young children of both sexes. Conducted by the United Aboriginal Mission, the children at Bomaderry were moved on to Cootamundra and Kinchela when they reached about ten years of age. When these young people turned fourteen, the board arranged for them to be engaged as apprentices by private employers. The Cootamundra, Kinchela and Bomaderry institutions functioned in these roles from their founding until 1969.

Read's pamphlet did not record the precise proportion of stolen children who went to these three homes but it gave the impression, through both its discussion and photographs, that the majority were placed in them. He has a section called 'Life in the Homes', which he begins by stating: 'the view of the Board was that Aboriginal children had to be separated from the rest of their race'.

> One *Annual Report* of the 1920s predicted that the children, once institutionalized, would not be allowed to return to any Aboriginal station or reserve, 'except perhaps those who have parents, on an occasional visit'.

[43] Read, *Stolen Generations*, pp 5–6
[44] Read, *Stolen Generations*, p 6
[45] Read, *Stolen Generations*, p 9

> In practice, no home visits were allowed at all. Parents received no encouragement to come, and were positively discouraged if they attempted to stay more than a day. Even the Christmas holidays were generally spent in the homes. Letters in and out were censored.[46]

Conditions in the homes, he said, were appalling. The environment was 'sterile and hostile' and 'the staff at the homes varied between those who might have been good in another environment, and the psychopathic ... probably all of them were brutalized by the system in which they had chosen to work'. One manager at Kinchela was accused of being drunk on duty, using a stockwhip on the boys, tying them up, and using dietary punishments. He locked one boy in a shed for several days and told him to eat hay. Another boy got frostbite from tending to cows barefoot before dawn on winter mornings. The staff indoctrinated their charges with the view that blacks on reserves were 'dirty, untrustworthy and bad'. Children became ashamed of the colour of their skin.

> Girls have stated that they crossed the road in order to avoid an Aboriginal man, not just because they had been taught to, but because in the end, they themselves had come to believe that he was a threat — dirty, brutal, black! [47]

Read acknowledged, however, that some ex-wards, especially women, resented criticism of the institutions.

> They argue that if they had been left on the reserves they would now be barefoot, pregnant or drunk. Through the homes, they say, they have gained a knowledge of the 'right' way to live.[48]

He admitted the psychological issues in the institutionalization of children were 'most complex', but made it clear that the overall outcomes were unreservedly awful. Whether their superintendents were good or bad, the children ended up 'emotionally, spiritually, intellectually and psychologically deprived, and the scars might never heal'.[49] Read composed a picture of a fictional but supposedly typical 'composite family' subject to these institutions and wrote of the long-term consequences:

> As the children who had come back grew to their thirties, it was clear that they were not able to function as normal adults. They had nightmares. They resented their parents, particularly their mother, as if she had been responsible for their removal. They had periods of alcoholism during which they became uncontrollably violent. They drank or gambled what

[46] Read, *Stolen Generations*, p 10
[47] Read, *Stolen Generations*, pp 10–11
[48] Read, *Stolen Generations*, p 18
[49] Read, *Stolen Generations*, p 11

> few wages they earned, and remained what the Aborigines Protection Board called 'unassimilable'.[50]
>
> In a mid-western town I met an ex-Kinchela man. When he was ten he had been taken straight from school by a welfare officer, he said, and was never able to say goodbye to his father. He was placed in Kinchela and was an inmate during the period described above. He could not, or would not, talk of his experiences there. He was divorced, had been an alcoholic, and was deeply unhappy ... Kinchela crippled that man for life.[51]

Regimes of this kind, according to Read, had an overt political purpose. The long-term intention of the board and its political supporters was to absorb Aborigines into the white population. Their children were the vehicles to accomplish this. The 1926 Aborigines Protection Board report stated that when children were placed in a 'first class private home', the superior standard of life would 'pave the way for the absorption of these people into the general population'.[52] The intention, Read claimed, 'was to separate children from their parents (and their race) permanently'.[53]

In short, the removal of Aboriginal children from parents, and their integration through employment with white people, would inevitably cause the decline and eventual elimination of the population of full-blood and half-caste Aborigines. Hence, Read felt the term 'genocide' entirely appropriate.

He said the board pursued this policy without restriction between 1915 and 1939 when its officers had full power to decide which children were removed and on what grounds. However, in 1939, the New South Wales law changed when Aboriginal children were brought under the jurisdiction of a new Child Welfare Act. Once again, hearings before a magistrate became necessary for a child to be removed.

Between his first foray into the subject in 1981 and the book he published in 1999, *A Rape of the Soul So Profound*, Read grew far more confident about his thesis, especially on the accusation of genocide. He no longer confined his accusation to a desire to end Aboriginal culture or 'Aboriginality'. He now said the aim was to end the Aboriginal race itself. He observed that a number of Australian state governments recognized early in the twentieth century that their earlier expectation of the Aboriginal race 'dying out' by natural causes was not being fulfilled. Instead, there had been a rapid increase in the

[50] Read, *Stolen Generations*, p 4. 'The family is imaginary,' Read wrote, 'but every one of the details happened to one or more individuals.'
[51] Read, *Stolen Generations*, p 11
[52] Read, *Stolen Generations*, p 2
[53] Read, *Stolen Generations*, p 7

birth rate of half-castes and others of part-Aboriginal descent. So governments came to the conclusion they had to eliminate the Aborigines themselves. Read wrote: 'Their extinction, it seemed, would not occur naturally after all, but would have to be arranged.' The Aborigines Protection Acts enacted by various governments in this period were consciously designed, he argued, to stem the increase and reduce the size of the Aboriginal population. 'The removal and institutionalization of the children was to be the principal weapon of the new Acts.'[54]

Read said the main information for his thesis came from the surviving archival records. He came to his conclusions, he said, 'after reading *all* the thousands of childcare records of the NSW Aborigines Protection Board'.[55] The New South Wales Archives held the detailed files of 800 wards removed from 1916 to 1928. It held a further list of names, though without any other details, of the 1500 children made wards of the board up to 1936. Apart from this, there were no systematic records kept of Aboriginal children sent to non-indigenous state or religious homes. Moreover, he observed that the number of children of Aboriginal descent who were not recognized by the board as Aboriginal was also unknown, but was likely to have been substantial after the 1950s, since welfare officers were then instructed to hand over Aboriginal children of 'lighter caste' to the Child Welfare Department if they were to be committed. In total, Read identified some 5625 Aboriginal children removed from their parents between 1883 and 1969.[56]

Read said this tally of removals meant that 'perhaps one in six or seven Aboriginal children have been taken from their families during this century', and hence 'there is not an Aboriginal person in New South Wales who does not know, or is not related to, one or more of his/her countrymen who were institutionalized by the whites'.[57] This claim, that every Aborigine has been connected in some way to the Stolen Generations issue, has informed the whole debate ever since, not only in New South Wales but across Australia. The *Bringing Them Home* report gave its full endorsement: 'not one Indigenous family has escaped the effects of forcible removal ... Most families have been affected, in one or more generations, by the forcible removal, of one or more children'.[58]

[54] Peter Read, *A Rape of the Soul So Profound: The Return of the Stolen Generation*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1999, p 22
[55] Read, *Rape of the Soul*, p 176 (emphasis added)
[56] Read, *Stolen Generations*, pp 8–9
[57] Read, *Stolen Generations*, p 18
[58] *Bringing Them Home*, p 37

All the blame for this belonged to white people, Read said. For 50 years, the policy was proposed, debated and affirmed in the New South Wales parliament and administered by government instrumentalities. There were plenty of people, many of them pillars of society, who were aware of the policy and what it entailed but they shirked their responsibility to oppose it.

> For two or three generations there was scarcely a word of protest by those whose duty it was to protest: members of parliamentary oppositions, Christians, parents, people of common humanity. Why? Why was it necessary to remove five thousand children from their parents and try to turn them into white people?[59]

The reason, he said, was partly because the growth of the Aboriginal camps posed a 'positive menace to the State' but primarily it was because of the whites' psychological need to interfere. 'White people have never been able to leave Aboriginal people alone,' Read said.

> The whites could not tolerate a different way of life. They did not like being not wanted, not needed. But legally, economically, and in values, Aborigines were not like whites, and most did not want to be. Those who wanted to be were not allowed to be. When it became obvious that Aborigines didn't want them, or want to be like them, the whites resorted to force.[60]

THE IMPACT OF READ'S PAMPHLET

Since 1981, Read's pamphlet of less than 10,000 words — which he later said he wrote 'at white heat in a single day'[61] — has had an enormous impact on black and white relations in this country, especially about how Aboriginal people now regard their recent history. Read has, quite deservedly, claimed the credit for defining the issue himself.

He has acknowledged that in the 1920s some Aborigines did identify child removal as a political issue. The lobby group, the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association, complained about the removal and exploitation of Aboriginal girls. It protested that 'girls of tender age are torn away from their parents ... and put to service in an environment as near to slavery as it is possible to find'. In 1927, the association's president, Fred Maynard, urged the New South Wales Premier to recognize that 'family life of Aboriginal people shall be held sacred and free from invasion and interference and that the

[59] Read, *Stolen Generations*, p 4
[60] Read, *Stolen Generations*, pp 2, 5
[61] Peter Read, *A Rape of the Soul*, p 48

children shall be left in control of their parents'.[62] In South Australia, after the government passed the Aborigines (Training of Children) Act of 1923, a deputation of Aboriginal men from the Point Macleay settlement said in a petition to the state Governor:

> We don't mind the Government taking them and training them. We want them to get on and be useful. But we want to feel that we still have full rights over them, and that they are our own children. There are a lot of times when a woman with only one daughter is unable to get about, and if the girl is taken from her, there is no one left to help her, and she has to borrow the daughters of other women.[63]

However, none of these complaints amounted to a public campaign that put child removal in the forefront of Aboriginal demands. After the 'Day of Mourning' to mark the 1938 sesquicentenary of British colonization, a deputation of Aboriginal leaders presented to Prime Minister Lyons a ten-point program of demands. The separation of children was not on the agenda and there was no mention of children being taken or removed, let alone stolen.[64]

The Aboriginal political lobbies formed after World War II had both black and white members and Read observed that, until the 1960s, the whites held most of the executive positions and did most of the public speaking. He speculated that some of the more conservative members of these joint associations might have actually approved of separations. In any case, he argued it was simply beyond the comprehension of anyone at the time to recognize 'that certain of our own officials of state and church, foster parents and institutional superintendents were acting with the wickedness revealed in *Bringing Them Home*'.

> few Indigenous or non-Indigenous people in the 1960s really understood that there was a *policy* of removal at all. Separation had become structural, comparatively invisible. Individual cases which were occasionally publicized seemed to concern individual children who happened to be Aboriginal, in need because their parents, poor things, couldn't cope, and who

[62] Read, *Rape of the Soul*, p 167. Read wrongly names this organization the Aborigines Protective Association. The full letter is reproduced in Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus, eds, *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights: A Documentary History*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1999, pp 66–7

[63] 'Give Us Our Children. The Aborigines' Plea. Opposition to New Act', *Register*, Adelaide, 21 December 1923, reproduced in Attwood and Markus, eds, *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights*, pp 109–10

[64] 'Our Ten Points. Deputation to the Prime Minister', *Australian Abo Call*, No. 1, April 1938, reproduced in Attwood and Markus, eds, *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights*, pp 89–91

must be rescued to be given a better chance. Not even all the officials who carried away the children knew that there was a policy.[65]

Read doesn't mention them but it is worth considering the attitude of the generation of Aboriginal activists who emerged in that era of radical political foment, the late 1960s and early 1970s. At the time, national organizations began to appear making demands for reform on behalf of all Aboriginal people. Some emulated the highly publicized American revolutionary group, the Black Panthers. Others took part in the famous Tent Embassy set up on the lawns of Parliament House Canberra in 1972 to symbolize Aborigines as a subjugated people making demands on the imperial power. Given the ability of activists like these to attract media attention through this highly effective political theatre, it is surprising that none of them even hinted that their people were, at that very time, suffering a campaign of genocide from white bureaucrats stealing their children. Three political groups from the era presented their demands as political lists, reproduced here in Table 1.1.[66]

Aboriginal activists were not the only ones who failed to realize what was going on. So did many white people, even those in a good position to know. For instance, the entire body of the Australian anthropological profession remained in the dark. A literature search by one of the profession's leading members, Kenneth Maddock, revealed that, between 1925 and 1975, none of the anthropologists who did fieldwork in outback Australia, who lived with and investigated the thoughts, beliefs and culture of the Aborigines, had any inkling of the genocide allegedly taking place at the very same time.[67]

Into this intellectual fog came Peter Read with a different way of seeing. As part of his oral history research in the late 1970s into the Wiradjuri people of south-western New South Wales, Read had interviewed a number of former inmates of Aboriginal institutions, some of whom did not know the whereabouts of their families. One of these was Coral Edwards, with whom Read co-founded the social work agency Link-Up to help those who had no record of their families to find them again. In researching the records of their remov-

[65] Read, *Rape of the Soul So Profound*, pp 169–70 (his emphasis)

[66] National Tribal Council, Policy Manifesto, adopted 13 September 1970; Black Panthers of Australia, Platform and Programme, 1970; Aboriginal Embassy Land Rights Policy, '5 Point Policy', 1972; interviews with Gary Foley, Paul Coe, Dennis Walker, Mike Anderson, Bobbi Sykes in *The Australian*, *The Age* and ABC Television, December 1971–March 1972; all reproduced in Attwood and Markus, eds, *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights*, pp 246–64

[67] Kenneth Maddock, 'Genocide? The Silence of the Anthropologists', *Quadrant*, November 2000, pp 11–16

TABLE 1.1: DEMANDS OF ABORIGINAL ACTIVISTS, 1970–1972

National Tribal Council, Policy Manifesto, 13 September, 1970	*Black Panthers of Australia, Platform and Program, 1970*	*Aboriginal Tent Embassy, Five Point Policy, 1972*
1. Federal responsibility and action	1. We want freedom.	1. Full State rights to the Northern Territory under Aboriginal ownership and control with all titles to minerals, etc.
2. Land and mineral rights	2. We want full employment for our people.	2. Ownership of all other reserves and settlements throughout Australia with all titles to minerals and mining rights.
3. Education	3. We want an end to the robbery of the white man of our Black Community.	3. The preservation of all sacred lands not included in 1 and 2.
4. Consultation and power	4. We want decent housing.	4. Ownership of certain areas of certain cities with all titles to minerals and mining rights.
5. Legal aid and protection	5. We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent Australian society.	5. As compensation, an initial payment of six billion dollars for all other land throughout Australia plus a percentage of the gross national income per annum.
6. Health	6. We want all black men to be exempt from military service.	
7. Employment	7. We want an immediate end to *police brutality, murder & rape of black* people.	
8. Cultural pluralism	8. We want freedom for all black men held in prisons and jails.	
9. Freedom from prejudice and discrimination	9. We want all black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their	

	peer group.
10. Justice and the rule of law	10. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace.

Source: All documents reproduced in Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus (eds), *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights: A Documentary History*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1999, pp 246–54, 257–8 (emphases in original)

al in the New South Wales State Archives, he formulated his 'stolen generations' thesis, together with his accusation of genocide, and published it in his 1981 pamphlet.

That publication attracted immediate attention within academic, legal and social policy circles but the real turning point came in 1983 when the newly elected Hawke Labor government convened a meeting in Canberra of the National Aboriginal Consultative Council. Read has described how Coral Edwards addressed the meeting to apply for funding for Link-Up. She told the 40, mostly middle-aged Aboriginal representatives about the dimensions of child removal and the objectives of the policy. Mothers had not voluntarily given their children away, she said. Rather, '*the governments never intended that the children should ever return*'. Read described the scene:

> It was one of those remarkable moments when Australian history takes a new direction. A palpable silence descended on the smoky atmosphere. Heads looked up, pencils hovered. Unspoken questions began to flash about the room. 'Is that why I've never met my auntie?' 'Is that why my family never talks about my youngest sister?' 'Do you mean that my mother never put us away?'[68]

Read and Edwards got their grant. Read spent much of the next decade both working for Link-Up and employed as an academic with the Australian National University doing further oral history. He published the books *Down There With Me on the Cowra Mission: An Oral History of Erambie Aboriginal Reserve* (1984), *A Hundred Years War: The Wiradjuri People and the State* (1988) and *The Lost Children: Thirteen Australians Taken from their Aboriginal Families Tell of the Struggle to Find their Natural Parents* (1989).

[68] Read, *Rape of the Soul*, p 72 (his emphasis)

Over this period, his interpretation of child removal policy became one of the great burning issues within Aboriginal politics, eventually attracting a similar degree of public attention as protests over land rights and deaths in police custody.[69] The story lent itself to dramatic treatment, especially the picture of police wrenching children from the arms of loving parents. It became the principal theme of two of the four episodes of the historical drama series screened in 1983 by SBS television, *Women of the Sun*, written by Hyllus Maris and Sonia Borg, who also wrote a novel based on the series.[70] Margaret Tucker's 1977 autobiography, *If Everyone Cared*, which recorded her removal from Moonahcullah Aboriginal Station to the Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls' Home in 1917, inspired the documentary film, *Lousy Little Sixpence*, which was broadcast on ABC television in 1983.[71] Its public reception was strong enough for a new edition of Tucker's autobiography to be reprinted three times in 1983 and 1984. Her book became a recommended text in high school courses in Australian history. The film told its audience:

> The reserves were made a training ground for the Aboriginal children to become servants. The protection board's plan was to then remove the children from the reserve and place them under the control of white employers. Once removed these children would never be allowed to return home.

The Stolen Generations story subsequently attracted a great deal of attention in both film and television. The ABC followed up *Lousy Little Sixpence* with a program about Coral Edwards in the 1984 television series *Faces of Change* by Anne Deveson.[72] Another film-maker attracted to the genre was Anne Pratten in *Terra Nullius* in

[69] For bibliographies of the literature on this subject see: Peter Read, 'Don't Turn Your Back on Me: A Bibliographical Review of the Literature of the Stolen Generations', *Aboriginal Law Bulletin*, 1995; Bain Attwood, '"Learning About the Truth": The Stolen Generations Narrative', in Bain Attwood and Fiona Magowan, eds, *Telling Stories: Indigenous History and Memory in Australia and New Zealand*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2001

[70] *Women of the Sun*, Geoffrey Nottage director, Hyllus Maris and Sonia Borg screenplay, Bob Weis producer, Generation Films, 1982; Hyllus Maris and Sonia Borg, *Women of the Sun* (introduction, script, stills), Currency Press, Sydney, 1983; Hyllus Maris and Sonia Borg, *Women of the Sun* (novel), Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1983

[71] Margaret Tucker, *If Everyone Cared: Autobiography of Margaret Tucker MBE*, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1977; *Lousy Little Sixpence*, Alec Morgan director, Alec Morgan and Gerald Bostock producers, Sixpence Productions/Australian Film Commission, 1983

[72] Anne Deveson, *Faces of Change* (book of the TV series), ABC/Fontana, Sydney, 1984, pp 90–117

1992.[73] Darlene Johnson wrote, directed and appeared in her documentary *Stolen Generations* in 2000. More recently, several films about Aborigines in contemporary Australia have used the stolen generations either as their principal subject, as in David Vadiviloo's *Beyond Sorry* (2003) and Nicholas Boseley's *Shit Skin* (2002), or as a recurring sub-theme, as in *My Colour Your Kind* and *Grace* from the Australian Film Commission's 1998 *Shifting Sands* series. The success of Phil Noyce's 2002 film *Rabbit-Proof Fence* proved the Stolen Generations such a popular theme that Baz Luhrmann adapted it for his 2008 blockbuster *Australia*.

Popular music also helped spread the word and embed the emotions. In 1983 Bob Randall revived his 1960s song 'Brown Skin Baby'. In 1990 Archie Roach's album *Charcoal Lane* contained two songs about stolen children, 'Took the Children Away' and 'Munjana'. The latter was about the highly publicized case of Russel Moore or James Savage, an Aboriginal adopted at birth by a white family and taken to the United States where as a young man in 1990 he was convicted of rape and murder. Australian witnesses for the defence, who included Peter Read, blamed his crimes on the effects of being a stolen child.[74]

A less predictable popular success was an historical exhibition by the National Archives in 1993 about the Commonwealth Government's involvement in the removal of part-Aborigines in the Northern Territory. Entitled *Between Two Worlds* and with Read as 'curatorial adviser', it recorded a history strongly influenced by his interpretation. It went on a two-year national tour to fifteen metropolitan and regional museums and galleries where, all up, it attracted 500,000 visitors.[75]

Meanwhile, book publishers sought out Aboriginal autobiographies and family histories emphasizing child removal and family break-up: Elsie Roughsey's *An Aboriginal Mother Tells of the Old and the New* (1984), Sally Morgan's *My Place* (1987), Glenys Ward's *Wandering Girl* (1987), Alice Nannup's *When the Pelican Laughed* (1992), Stuart Rintoul's *The Wailing* (1993), Edwards and Read's *The Lost Children*

[73] Anne Pratten, *Terra Nullius*, Australian Film School, Sydney, 1992

[74] Read, *Rape of the Soul*, pp 188–210. Their testimony probably influenced the judge who commuted Moore's death sentence to life imprisonment.

[75] Rowena MacDonald, 'Between Two Worlds: The Commonwealth Government and the Removal of Aboriginal Children of Part Descent in the Northern Territory — an Australian Archives Exhibition', *Aboriginal History*, 18, 1994, p 165. A book of the exhibition with the same title and author was published by IAD Press, Alice Springs, 1995. The figure of 500,000 visitors is from the Australian Archives website; http://www.naa.gov.au/whats-on/exhibitions/past-exhibitions/between-two-worlds.aspx

(1989), and Barbara Cummings's *Take This Child: From Kahlin Compound to the Retta Dixon Children's Home* (1990). In 1987 this market produced one of Australia's all-time best-sellers. Although one member of the white pastoralist family who employed her Aboriginal grandmother has seriously challenged the veracity of Sally Morgan's *My Place,* the book remains a compulsory text for high school literature courses in most states and has sold more than 500,000 copies.[76]

Publishers were so keen about titles of this kind that in 1994 Bruce Simms of Magabala Books accepted the manuscript of a novel by Wanda Koolmatrie about her experience of growing up in a white foster family. When published under the title *My Own Sweet Time* it won the 1995 Dobbie Award for a first-published book by a woman writer and was short-listed for the 1995 New South Wales Premier's Literary Award. The real author later revealed the novel was a literary hoax. Leon Carmen said he wrote it under the persona of an Aboriginal woman after years of frustration at having his literary manuscripts rejected when he identified himself to publishers as a middle-aged white man.[77]

At the same time, the emergence of Aboriginal politics onto a favourable national platform under the Hawke and Keating Labor governments won the cause both support and funding. Between 1987 and 1991, the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody investigated the causes of the apparently high number of deaths of Aborigines in prison. Although the commission could not actually find an abnormal rate of deaths in custody — in fact, death rates in prison turned out to be lower than for comparable age groups in the Aboriginal community at large — and although it could not attribute any deaths to brutality by police or prison officers, it did find that of 99 fatalities it investigated, 43 of them were of people who had been separated from their parents. The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs at the time, Robert Tickner, thought this ratio alone was sufficient to prove the Stolen Generations' case. 'If that doesn't tell the story, nothing else will,' he told a Darwin conference in 1994.[78] When the Keating government responded to the commission's report, it

[76] Judith Drake-Brockman, *Wongi Wongi*, Hesperian Press, Perth, 2001; *Sunday*, Channel Nine, 21 March 2004, 'Sally Morgan: Claims of Fabrication'

[77] *The Australian*, 14 March 1997, p 2

[78] Robert Tickner speech recorded in Jacqui Katona and Chips Mackinolty eds, *The Long Road Home: The Going Home Conference 3–6 October 1994*, Karu Aboriginal Child Care Agency, Darwin, 1996, p 14

allocated $150 million to various Aboriginal legal and welfare programs. The Link-Up organization got $3 million.[79]

The United Nations designated 1993 the Year of Indigenous Peoples and, in a speech the prior December, Prime Minister Paul Keating launched Australia's contribution to the exercise. He said Australia had to acknowledge its awful history. Reading from a text by speechwriter and left-wing Melbourne historian, Don Watson, Keating gave Read's thesis the ultimate political stamp of approval:

> We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. We brought the diseases. The alcohol. We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practised discrimination and exclusion. It was our ignorance and our prejudice.[80]

Keating's assertion, 'we took the children from their mothers', was surprisingly imprudent for a politician in his position. By this time, the Stolen Generations' cause had attracted a gaggle of human rights lawyers busy familiarizing themselves with international precedents on reparations and compensation for the loss of traditional indigenous cultures and customs. By prejudging the issue, the Prime Minister obviously bolstered their determination and raised the ambit of their demands.

These lawyers, together with an array of both Aboriginal and white political activists, organized the 'Going Home' conference in Darwin in October 1994 that attracted more than 600 people. Many of those attending identified themselves as members of the Stolen Generations. Melbourne barrister Ron Merkel, soon to be appointed by the Labor government a Federal Court judge, told the audience of the reparations Germany had paid the Jews after World War II, adding: 'There is good reason to suggest that the notion of reparations for breaches of international law may be a way in which compensation would be payable to people who had suffered these violations in Australia.' He said the removal of children by the government amounted to a breach of its fiduciary duty.[81]

The audience got an unexpected bonus when Labor minister Robert Tickner addressed the conference and announced that he supported a government inquiry into the Stolen Generations. This promise was the source of what in May 1995 became the Human

[79] Read, 'Don't Turn Your Back on Me'. For a summary of the political climate that produced the royal commission and its findings, see Richard Broome, *Aboriginal Australians*, 2nd edition, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1994, pp 219–26

[80] Paul Keating, *Paul Keating, Prime Minister: Major Speeches of the First Year*, Australian Labor Party, Canberra, n.d., p 210

[81] *Long Road Home*, pp 13–14

Rights and Equal Opportunity *Bringing Them Home* inquiry into the separation of indigenous children from their families.[82]

As well as legal and political redress, the conference adopted a strategy to win public support through a greater focus on the nation's history. In the opening address, Bill Risk of the local Larrakia Association said:

> Reconciliation will not be possible unless Australia is prepared to rediscover the true history of this land, and learn from this history. The challenge of this Conference is for the rest of Australia to learn from the history of the stolen generations.[83]

Risk was right to emphasize this because history had always been central to the existence of this cause. This was true not only of those white people who came to believe the story but of the Aboriginal people who did the same. The fact that the story has been not only acceptable to, but also disseminated by, academic historians has been important in giving it authority in the wider culture. Raimond Gaita acknowledged that the Human Rights Commission inquiry was not sufficient for the task. '*Bringing Them Home*,' he wrote, 'is no substitute for an informed history.'[84] A number of university-based historians have written books that supported Read's interpretation. They include Anna Haebich in *For Their Own Good* (1988) and *Broken Circles* (2000), Andrew Markus in *Governing Savages* (1990), Tony Austin in *I Can Picture the Old Home So Clearly* (1993) and Heather Goodall in *Invasion to Embassy* (1996). There was also considerable supportive literature in articles published by Australian academic journals of history and the law.

None of this body of work has challenged, or even thought to question, Read's interpretation. When the *Bringing Them Home* report endorsed his thesis and made it one of the big national issues of the 1990s, it entered the realm of legend. Like all legends, it has attracted its popularizers and summarizers. In 2005, Henry Reynolds used his considerable ability as a prose stylist to capture the essence of the story

[82] Robert Tickner, *Taking a Stand: Land Rights to Reconciliation*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney 2001, p 55. Bain Attwood has claimed the Truth and Reconciliation Commission established in South Africa to investigate the apartheid era in that country influenced the Australian decision to undertake the Human Rights Commission inquiry: 'Learning About the Truth', p 255 n 86. However, Tickner's promise at Darwin in October 1994 predated both the South African commission's appointment in July 1995 and its internationally reported public hearings, which only began in April 1996.

[83] *Long Road Home*, p 7

[84] Gaita, 'Genocide and Pedantry', p 44

in a series of vivid images. In his book *Nowhere People*, Reynolds wrote:

> Once those involved in the practice of taking children were persuaded that it was in the best interests of both the children and society, much else followed as a logical consequence. The follow-through was irresistible. Parental resistance must be overcome, even by force or threat of force if necessary. The younger the child the better before habits were formed, attachments, language learnt, traditions absorbed. The break from family, kin and community must be decisive and permanent, otherwise the whole exercise would be jeopardized. If young people could return to their families the effort had been wasted. That being the case, other aspects of the system made sense even though they appear in themselves to be arbitrary and gratuitous. Children should be provided with no information about where they had come from or where they could return to. They might even be encouraged to think that their parents hadn't wanted them or were dead. Names could be changed to prevent subsequent searches for origin. Siblings were often separated to undermine familial solidarity. Use of tribal language was forbidden on pain of punishment. All memories of an Aboriginal past were to be discredited and allowed to fade away to hasten the cause of assimilation.
>
> None of this was accidental, arbitrary or the result of individual malice. The men and women who shaped and implemented policy knew exactly what they were doing. They were self-consciously important players in the great game of nation building and race consolidation.[85]

The widespread acceptance of the Stolen Generations story is testimony to the power of historical research and writing, especially to the authority of traditional documentary research. It is difficult in a contentious issue of this kind to win public credibility from oral history alone, since most members of the public are well aware how easily the stories that individuals tell in interviews can change over time or be influenced by others or even be contrived by the storyteller. This is much less true, however, of documentary research. Academic historians like Read who say they have gone to the archives, read what is there, and formed their interpretation from the documents, have far more credibility. Moreover, historical scholarship generates its own conviction. Individuals often find it difficult to understand social processes, even those that affect their own lives profoundly, without the benefit of someone providing an overarching explanation of that process. Historians are well placed to provide that wider account, especially when they have access to a large amount of the documentation left in the wake of what took place, so they can see its effects on many individuals over a long period of time.

[85] Henry Reynolds, *Nowhere People*, Viking, Melbourne, 2005, pp 219–20

Read acknowledges his own project took this route. In the 1970s, for his research on the Wiradjuri people, he conducted oral interviews with a number of Aboriginal people who had been separated from their parents when they were children, 'but I listened to them as individuals, without thinking about the effect on Aboriginality as a whole'. In 1980, he began to investigate the old records of the Aborigines Protection Board held by the New South Wales State Archives. Here he read the individual case files of children made wards of the board between 1916 and the 1930s. It was the reading of all these files, he said, that led him to his ultimate conclusion:

> I imagined at the time that I was writing the stories of individuals, but I understand now that I was historicizing the process of separation. The sum of the 'lazy and useless' domestic servants and alcoholic violent men was more than thousands of difficult, futile or wasted lives. It was the by-product of a concerted attempt by the state to put an end to indigenality. At last I understood the life histories not only as human tragedies, but also in the context in which these things were allowed to happen, no, were intended, to happen.[86]

Although other historians moved onto his territory after he had laid it out, this interpretation of our history has always remained Peter Read's. He broke the story in the first place, he determined its political and moral parameters, he defined the evidence that counted, and he attributed the motives to the responsible officials. Before Read, even the participants themselves had a variety of explanations for separation. Some impugned white attitudes but others, he acknowledged, thought the reasons benevolent: to rescue children from broken families, to train them for employment, or simply to give them a better chance in life. After Read, one explanation became dominant: to destroy Aboriginality. To this motive, he added the essential component required to define the process into a single historical event: a memorable name. Read actually credits the title to his wife, Jay Arthur, who thought his original choice, *The Lost Generations*, too bland. She recommended the more scandalous adjective 'stolen'.[87]

Read made no secret that his work was driven by a political agenda. He has written that from the early 1980s to the mid-1990s, he was one of those who worked hard to establish this story. 'We collected oral histories, we published first-person accounts, we produced documentary collections, we analysed the results.' These activities, he said, made the Stolen Generations narrative part of the fabric of Australian history. By about 1995, Read says, he felt 'this

[86] Read, *Rape of the Soul*, pp 48–9
[87] Read, *Rape of the Soul*, p 49

historical fabric would remain whole' and it was no longer necessary to bolster the standard version with more life stories of separated people. It was time to pursue a wider agenda. 'The time had clearly arrived for historians who had been working in the field to move the story along: to advise tribunals and members of parliament, to act as expert witnesses.'[88] The result was the *Bringing Them Home* inquiry and all that followed in its train.

Read must now be very satisfied with his work. Indeed, while the subject matter prohibits public exuberance, he must have had private moments when he felt extremely pleased with himself. No other Australian academic has ever had this much influence on national affairs. Almost single-handedly, he took an issue from the very margins of significance and put it at the moral core of the nation. Indeed, by 2002 Read was supremely confident his findings were unshakable. So much so that he could publicly float the idea that some of his unpublished oral history research into Aboriginal family life concealed stories that might have justified the very policies he had spent the previous twenty years denouncing:

> Rape and sexual abuse of children less than ten years of age, violent crime, violent death, black magic, physical abuse, psychiatric illness, drug addiction, heroin dealing, imprisonment, juvenile delinquency, alcoholism, children neglected by their extended family, all form the narrative of an utterly destructive family life ... It is quite possible that these explosive and shattering linked autobiographies will never be published, because the family does not wish it. That is the right of the participants which, naturally, I respect. What is more complex is the reaction of experienced analysts of stolen generation histories with whom I have discussed the transcripts. Their reaction often has been, 'For God's sake, you can't possibly publish that, it will confirm every prejudice in the community about Aboriginal society. It will be used to demonstrate that the children should have been taken away.'[89]

[88] Read, 'Clio or Janus?', p 56
[89] Read, 'Clio or Janus?', pp 58–9

CHAPTER TWO

The evidence of the New South Wales archives

IN arguing that the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Board removed children from their parents in order to eradicate their Aboriginality, the most relevant records Peter Read relied upon were the board's Ward Registers 1916–1928. These registers contain individual files on each of 800 children made wards of the board. A ward was a child under eighteen years who had been admitted to the control of the board or to one of its institutions. Although the title of the registers indicates they cover the period 1916 to 1928, also included in the 800 files are 117 about children removed to the institutions at Bomaderry, Singleton and Cootamundra from 1907 to 1915. In addition, there are files on eight children who became wards between 1929 and 1932.[1]

Read singled out the importance of this source for his thesis: 'Today it is in the State Archives, and in it, even the casual reader may catch a glimpse of the enormous tragedy of what happened to the first eight hundred children removed under the 1915 Amendment.'[2] Read urged his readers to look up the registers and even gave the address of the archives office in The Rocks, Sydney, where they could find them.

[1] Ward Registers, 18 January 1916 to 7 December 1928, CGS 26 (4/8553–54; SR reel 2793), New South Wales State Archives, Sydney

[2] Peter Read, *The Stolen Generations: The Removal of Aboriginal Children in New South Wales 1883 to 1969*, NSW Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, Sydney, Occasional Paper No. 1, Sydney, 1981, p 6

It is certainly true that the information recorded in the registers about each child is invaluable for understanding the nature of Aboriginal removals in New South Wales. These forms record their names, their age and religion, the reserves and stations they came from, the names and addresses of their parents, siblings and other relatives, the reasons why they were removed, the institutions or employers they were sent to, and their subsequent history of institutional residence, location and employment.

Indeed, this is the most important surviving collection on this subject in New South Wales. It describes just over half the children separated from their families and communities by the Aborigines Protection Board up to 1938. As well as this, the New South Wales State Archives holds an index which includes the names of children made wards of the board from 1916 to 1938. The index records the names of children but not the details of their removal. This index, which *includes* the names of the 800 children discussed above, records a total of 1454 children.[3] There are another 128 names of children who were 'unattached', that is, not apprenticed and not living in one of the board's institutions, and who the board recorded in a separate index that covered the period 1919 to 1938.[4] After 1940, the number of Aboriginal children separated declined sharply because the board's pre-war apprenticeship system largely fell into disuse, as Chapter Three records. So the 800 files that are available for inspection by researchers represent a very large sample — more than 50 per cent — from the main period of child removal in the state.

Although these files formed the basis of Read's accusation against the board, he actually presented very little analysis of the information they contained. He offered no summary of all the reasons given for removal, no tallies of even the age or sex of the children, let alone whether their parents were alive, or who had previously cared for

[3] Index to Ward Registers, 1916–c.1938, CGS 27 (4/8555–56, SR Reel 1649), State Archives of New South Wales, Sydney

[4] Histories of Girls and Boys Unattached and For Whom Forms Have Not Been Prepared, Living Independent of Board or Placed in Institutions such as Mental Hospitals etc., State Archives of New South Wales, CGS 28 (Kingswood 4/8557). This index also contains letters related to the some individual cases. In his *Stolen Generations* pamphlet, Read's account of all these records is confusing and misleading. He said on page 8 there were 800 files in the Ward Registers of children removed from 1916 to 1928, plus another 1500 names in a separate index of children removed up to 1936. However, on page 9, he said the combined total of children in these records was 1600 and the removal period was 1916 to 1938. The reality is that the combined total of Ward Registers and Index was 1582 names and the removal period covered by both was 1907 to 1938.

them. All of this information is on the board's forms but Read did not provide any of it for his readers. Nor has he done so at any time in the subsequent 25 years when he has been regarded as the principal authority on this topic. Given there are 800 files comprising about 1200 pages of information, he would have found the task of compiling this data time-consuming, but hardly onerous. In a project like this, it is what a historian is supposed to do.

In 2007, I read this entire source and tallied all its information. Accessing the records is not as easy as Read originally indicated. Researchers have first to apply for permission to the New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs and undertake they will not reveal the names of individual children, some of whom are still alive. Apart from that, however, there were no restrictions on my access.[5] What follows is an analysis of the data provided by the Ward Registers to see what they reveal about the major claims made about the Stolen Generations.

THE 'PERMANENCY' OF SEPARATION

The core of Read's case is that separation was meant to be permanent. The board intended to destroy Aboriginality by permanently removing children from their families and their race. Read said this in his *Stolen Generations* pamphlet in 1981 and he has been repeating it ever since. Clearly, if the board permitted a large proportion of its wards to return home and be reunited with their families and relatives, it could not be fairly accused of a policy to steal them from either their kin or their race.

In Read's 1981 pamphlet he twice emphasized how permanent the separation of children from parents was intended to be. At one place he compared the fate of black children to white children. 'White children too were charged with neglect, and removed from their parents,' he said. 'But the Act under which white children were charged was a good deal more generous in the alternatives it offered to permanent separation, for it was framed with a different purpose.' Read said white single mothers could apply for a pension to care for their children themselves, or white children could be temporarily committed to a suitable relative, or white children in institutions could return home for the holidays. He said all these options were denied to Aborigines: 'No such provisions existed under the Aborigines Protection Act, for its intention was to separate children from

[5] Indeed, my application and access to the records were expedited by the New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the New South Wales State Archives. I am grateful to both organizations for their assistance.

their parents (and their race) permanently.'[6] Read also discussed the board's aims in placing children in institutions:

> The most important factor in the view of the Board was that Aboriginal children had to be separated from the rest of their race. One *Annual Report* of the 1920s predicted that the children, once institutionalized, would not be allowed to return to any Aboriginal station or reserve, 'except perhaps those who have parents, on an occasional visit'. In practice no home visits were allowed at all.[7]

In 1989 in the book *The Lost Children*, Read described the consequences of the amendment to the Act in 1916 (actually 1915), which gave the board the power to remove children without the need for a hearing before a magistrate. 'From that time,' he said, 'the Board's officers were at work removing hundreds of children — 1500 by 1934 — from the camps to which they were never to return.'[8] In 1999, in *A Rape of the Soul So Profound*, he wrote: 'I can think of many instances of parents asking unsuccessfully for their children to be returned, but not of a single instance where the child actually was returned.'[9] Similarly, in 2002, in an article where Read responded to the critics of his thesis, he called on other historians to support him:

> We need to proclaim, and demonstrate, to the doubters all over again, that larger truth ... that welfare officers, removing children solely because they were Aboriginal, intended and arranged that they should lose their Aboriginality and that they never return home.[10]

Other academic historians have concurred. In *Invasion to Embassy* (1996), Heather Goodall declared:

> The Board stated quite openly in its reports and minutes that it intended to reduce the birthrate of the Aboriginal population by taking adolescent girls away from their communities. Then it intended that the young people taken in this way would never be allowed to return to their homes or to any other Aboriginal community.[11]

Henry Reynolds in *Nowhere People* (2005) repeated an assertion that by this time had remained unchallenged for almost 25 years:

[6] Read, *Stolen Generations*, p 7
[7] Read, *Stolen Generations*, p 10
[8] Peter Read, 'Introduction', to Coral Edwards and Peter Read, eds, *The Lost Children: Thirteen Australians Taken from their Aboriginal Families Tell of the Struggle to Find Their Natural Parents*, Doubleday, Sydney, 1989, p xiv
[9] Peter Read, *A Rape of the Soul So Profound: The Return of the Stolen Generations*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1999, p 176
[10] Peter Read, 'Clio or Janus? Historians and the Stolen Generations', *Australian Historical Studies*, 118, 33, 2002, p 57
[11] Heather Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1770–1972*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1996, p 120

> The break from family, kin and community must be decisive and permanent, otherwise the whole exercise would be jeopardized. If young people could return to their families the effort had been wasted.[12]

The Link-Up submission to the Human Rights Commission inquiry said that, although a few stolen children might have been eventually reunited with their families, the great length of time they were separated had ruined their lives:

> We may go home but we cannot relive our childhoods. We may reunite with our mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, aunties, uncles, communities, but we cannot relive the 20, 30, 40 years we spent without their love and care, and they cannot undo the grief and mourning they felt when we were separated from them.[13]

However, anyone who reads all the way through Read's pamphlet *The Stolen Generations* will find something strange. Towards the end, Read discusses policies that permitted children to return home. Indeed, he admits that not only *could* children return home, but many of them actually *did*. He wrote:

> At the age of eighteen, wards and foster children were free legally to do what they wished. A good many went home to an emotional reunion, only to find, if the family lived on a managed Aboriginal station, that they were subject to a whole new set of Regulations.[14]

This part of Read's pamphlet is accurate. In New South Wales, once Aboriginal children had turned eighteen and completed their apprenticeship, they were free citizens. The contract they entered into by being apprenticed was then terminated. Of course, acknowledging this weakens Read's case considerably. Returning home to 'a whole new set of Regulations' is obviously far less traumatic than never finding your parents again, never knowing who they were, or grieving for them for 20, 30, 40 years.

How many children were there, then, who did return home? Read does not discuss this in *The Stolen Generations*, but in a later account of his oral history of the Wiradjuri people he indicated that the proportion of Wiradjuri girls who returned home was substantial.

[12] Henry Reynolds, *Nowhere People*, Viking, Melbourne, 2005, p 219

[13] Link-Up (NSW) submission to Human Rights Inquiry, quoted in Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children From Their Families*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, April 1997, p 12

[14] Read, *Stolen Generations*, p 16

> At the end of their training period, about half returned to their communities. A quarter did not return, or married white men, and there is no record of what happened to the others.[15]

If he had tallied all those children that the Ward Registers recorded as returning to their families or communities, he would have found they confirm the same story. My own count of the registers revealed that between 1907 and 1932, a total of 214 separated children were recorded as being reunited with their immediate family, mostly parents or in a small number of cases siblings, while another 223 were recorded as returning to an Aboriginal station, mostly the one they came from.[16] That is, a total of 437 of the wards, or 54 per cent of them, returned to Aboriginal communities. The real number was likely to have been significantly higher than that because many forms were incomplete about the wards' subsequent life experiences.

At least one other investigator has found the same. In an earlier study of Aboriginal girls and domestic service in New South Wales, Inara Walden counted the same forms and, although pursuing the familiar 'stolen generations' agenda, she reported that 287 out of 570 female apprentices, or just over 50 per cent of them, were recorded to have returned home when their time was complete. She also found that the forms, though obviously incomplete, recorded only 10 per cent did *not* return home.[17]

If, throughout the 25-year period from 1907 to 1932, more than half the wards returned to either their families or their communities, the board cannot accurately be accused of administering a policy for the permanent removal of children. On this issue, Read, Goodall, Reynolds and Link-Up have all seriously misled their readers.

CHILDREN'S AGE AT SEPARATION

Read implies that children were removed at very young age. In *The Stolen Generations* he writes:

> Some were taken so young that they did not remember where they had come from or even who their parents were. Many of these children did not, and could not, return to their families.[18]

[15] Read, *Rape of the Soul*, p 107

[16] These are exclusive categories, so there is no double counting. There were another 43 of these wards recorded as having been reunited with their family *and* returned to an Aboriginal station.

[17] Inara Walden, 'To Send Her to Service: Aboriginal Domestic Servants', *Aboriginal Law Bulletin*, 3, 76, October 1995, p 14 n 27

[18] Read, *Stolen Generations*, p 2

This is the public vision of the stolen children: babies, infants and children of primary school age. Popular culture reinforces it, as in Bob Randall's 'Brown Skin Baby':

> To a children's home a baby came
> With new clothes on and a new name.
> Day and night he would always say
> Mummy, Mummy, why they take me away?

In 2008, the SBS Television series, *First Australians*, claimed that between 1910 and 1970, of the 50,000 children allegedly removed from their families, 'most were aged under five'.[19]

The *Bringing Them Home* report selected cases of this kind to persuade the public that a terrible tragedy had occurred. The cases it recorded were certainly tragic, but whether they were typical is another question. The seventeen long case studies interspersed throughout its printed report describe the fate of sixteen children removed as babies, six as infants and nineteen of primary school age. It presented *no* case studies of anyone removed in their teenage years. Henry Reynolds provided the supposed rationale:

> The younger the child the better before habits were formed, attachments, language learnt, traditions absorbed.[20]

Read said that the intention was to eliminate Aboriginality:

> The board sought to take children as young as possible in order to cut the intergenerational bonds that reproduced Aboriginal culture and communities.[21]

In Read's original pamphlet, he did not tell how many children were removed at what ages. So even though he admitted the children could return home when they reached eighteen, he still implied that most were taken 'so young' they would have been separated for the entirety of their childhood. However, the Ward Registers reveal that only a minority of children were in the age range Read claimed. The broad age distribution of children separated from their parents is shown in Table 2.1.

[19] Episode Five: 'An Unhealthy Government Experiment', *First Australians: The Untold Story of Australia*, Beck Cole director, script by Beck Cole and Louis Nowra, Helen Panckhurst series producer, SBS Television, 2008

[20] Reynolds, *Nowhere People*, p 219

[21] Link-Up (NSW) and Tikka Jan Wilson, *In the Best Interest of the Child? Stolen Children: Aboriginal Pain/White Shame*, Aboriginal History Monograph 4, Australian National University, Canberra, 1997, p 56. This book is a revised version of the Link-Up submission to the Human Rights Commission 1996–97 inquiry into stolen children. Read was its principal researcher and author.

TABLE 2.1: AGE AT SEPARATION, WARDS OF NEW SOUTH WALES ABORIGINES PROTECTION BOARD, 1907–1932

Age	*Number*	*Proportion of all wards*
0–5	74	10.6 per cent
6–12	158	22.6 per cent
13–19	462	66.0 per cent
20–21	6	0.9 per cent

Source: Ward Registers 1916–1928, Aborigines Protection Board, NSW State Archives. The total of 700 separated children is fewer than that for all wards (800) because some files did not identify age. On a small proportion of other forms it is unclear whether the age recorded was the age of the child at the date the form was filled in or the age at the date the child was originally separated from its parents, which in some cases were different. However, by checking date of birth and by reading the history of each child on the form and its attachments, it is usually possible to determine the age of these children at separation. Where this is impossible or no age is recorded, the child is not counted in this table.

The great majority of wards in New South Wales were not 'as young as possible'. They were not babies, toddlers or pre-pubescent children. They were teenagers. Of the 700 children whose ages were recorded, a total of 462, or 66 per cent, were aged 13 to 19. There were only seven babies less than one year old and only eighteen aged between 12 months and two years. There were just 72 children less than six years old. That is, of those children whose age was recorded, just 10 per cent were babies or infants below school age. Less than a quarter were in the primary school age range of 6 to 12. In other words, the typical age of the Stolen Generations does not accord with the now-familiar picture painted by Read, the Human Rights Commission and the mainstream media.

SEX OF SEPARATED CHILDREN

Perhaps the only issue on which everyone in this debate is likely to agree is the sex of the children concerned. The overwhelming majority of those separated were female. It is possible to tell the sex of 781 children, because the form recorded it in the space provided or, if this was not filled out, from the child's name. Of these, a total of 557 children or 71 per cent were female, and some 224 children or 29 per cent were male. After this point, however, any agreement ends.

Peter Read and Heather Goodall explain these figures in terms of a political agenda to destroy Aboriginality by separating females from their communities and thus reducing the Aboriginal birth rate. I demonstrate below that this assertion cannot be taken seriously, since over the period Goodall was discussing, the Aboriginal birth rate in New South Wales was in a phase of vigorous growth. In Chapter Four I canvass more plausible explanations for the focus on girls.

FIRST DESTINATION OF ABORIGINAL WARDS

What did the Aborigines Protection Board do with the children once they were separated them from their parents? Once again the popular image created by historians turns out to be misleading. The biggest single destination for separated children was not an institution for Aboriginal children, as the historians would have us believe, but the workforce. A total of 337 wards, or 43 per cent of those for whom we have records, were placed in jobs. Another 32, or 4 per cent, were not removed from Aboriginal people but were placed in the charge of the manager of the Aboriginal station where they lived or of a nearby station. In other words, almost half of the children made wards were not removed to any kind of institution. Table 2.2 shows where the board sent them.

Note that this is a table of first destinations only, not all eventual destinations. Some institutions, in particular Bomaderry, sent a number of children on to other institutions when they grew older. With these kind of transfers, the total number of children in the Ward Registers who eventually attended the Cootamundra home increases to 230, and the total number who went to Kinchela increases to 45.

AGE AND FIRST DESTINATION OF SEPARATED CHILDREN

The most revealing data about what the board was doing at this time come from a comparison of the age of the children removed and where the board first sent them. Table 2.3 shows one thing very clearly: the three largest groups of separated children were those aged thirteen, fourteen and fifteen years old. These three age groups alone made up the majority (54 per cent) of all wards. Why was this? Were these the best ages at which to eliminate their Aboriginality, or to make them forget their families and their Aboriginal traditions, or for any of the other genocidal reasons that Read and his colleagues have proposed? The third column that shows where they went is telling. The board did not consign the majority of these ages to Cootamun dra or Kinchela or to isolation in other institutions. Instead it found them jobs. Of the 377 wards in the 13-, 14- and 15-year-old age

TABLE 2.2: FIRST DESTINATION OF ABORIGINAL WARDS, 1907–1932

Sent to:	*Number*
Employment	337
Bomaderry Children's Home	91
Singleton Aboriginal Home	64
Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls' Home	218
Kinchela Aboriginal Boys' Home	28
Aboriginal station *	32
Hospital or mental institution	2
Catholic convent/school	3
State school	1
Welfare institution, non-indigenous **	8
Total	784

Source: Ward Registers 1916–1928, Aborigines Protection Board, NSW State Archives. The total is less than all wards (800) because some files did not identify destination.

* Angledool 2, Brungle 1, Brewarrina 17, Euraba 2, Roseby Park 2, Terry Hie Hie 1, Urunga 6, unnamed station 1

** Boys' Home Camden 1, Glebe House 2, Mittagong Homes 2, Ormond House 2, Sydney Rescue Society 1

groups, a total of 221 or 65.6 per cent of them were placed directly into employment.

The girls were sent into jobs as domestic servants. The boys were sent into the agricultural and pastoral workforce. Both sexes usually had the formal status of apprentices, which meant their employers were supposed to teach them on the job. Girls boarded with their employers' families in city homes or on country properties. Boys lived with the other hands on pastoral stations and farms throughout New South Wales. The board appointed officers throughout the state to arrange these placements. It called them 'home-finders'. They were also to resolve any conflicts or grievances that arose, and to handle requests from either employer or employee for an apprentice to be re-located.[22] This program was known as the 'boarding-out system'.

[22] Some of the correspondence from a home-finder performing these tasks in 1934 is in the Ward Registers, bound between files no. 277 and 278

TABLE 2.3: AGE AT SEPARATION AND FIRST DESTINATION EMPLOYMENT, WARDS OF NSW ABORIGINES PROTECTION BOARD, 1907–1932

Age at separation	*Total Number*	*Sent straight to employment*
Less than one	7	–
One	18	–
Two	11	–
Three	15	–
Four	13	–
Five	10	–
Six	8	–
Seven	22	–
Eight	22	–
Nine	25	–
Ten	20	1
Eleven	34	4
Twelve	27	10
Thirteen	93	59
Fourteen	192	116
Fifteen	83	46
Sixteen	47	25
Seventeen	31	20
Eighteen	9	7
Nineteen	7	3
Twenty	3	3
Twenty-one	3	2
Total	700	296

Source: Ward Registers 1916–1928, Aborigines Protection Board, NSW State Archives.

As apprentices, both Aboriginal children and their white counterparts came under the Apprentices Act of 1901, which legally bound them to an employer for four years. Once this term was up, and if they had turned eighteen, they were free to go where they liked. Hence, rather than being removed from their parents for the whole of their childhood, the great majority of Aboriginal teenagers were away from home for four years while they were boarding with their

employers. In fact, during their employment, it was not uncommon for youth to go back and forth between their employers and holidays with their families.

Take the case of a girl from Brungle Aboriginal station, near Canberra, who was apprenticed to households in Summer Hill and Coogee in Sydney. She had become a ward, according to the file, because she 'desired to enter employment under Board'. As part of her work history, her file recorded:

> Spent 3 weeks holiday with parents at Abor. Stn. Brungle — returned to situation [her job] 4/3/37. Returned to Abor. Stn. Brungle 29–11–1937.[23]

Another girl who entered service in June 1928 was taken home by one of the board's female officers for a holiday with her parents in December 1929.[24] There was no requirement for the clerks and officials who filled out these forms to record personal details like holidays, which meant they usually went unrecorded, but there is enough information in the files to show the practice was not unusual.[25]

Anyone familiar with rural life in Australia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries would recognize this pattern, for it was a common experience of a great many white children at the same time. The ages of thirteen, fourteen and fifteen were those when most children in country New South Wales at this time joined the workforce. Most white children who lived in rural areas were never educated beyond primary school. Although the official school leaving age was fourteen, many left during the year they turned that age, which meant their actual leaving age was thirteen years plus some months. At the time, high school was the province of a minority, mainly in the cities. The Aboriginal wards of the board went into the workforce at much the same age as white children. Similarly, apprentices of both races lived with their employers while they gained the required skills.

In other words, in establishing this system the board was acting like an employment agency for a disadvantaged clientele (much like the employment firm run, as I write, by Thérèse Rein, wife of Labor Prime Minister Kevin Rudd). Chapter Three discusses this role in more detail, but here it is worth emphasizing what the Ward Register data on age distribution and the first destination make quite clear. The typical Aboriginal ward in New South Wales at this time was not a baby removed forever from loving parents to be reared in a soulless

[23] Ward Registers, file no. 731
[24] Ward Registers, file no. 656
[25] For example, Ward Registers, files no. 74, 741, 761 and 767

institution, but a teenage apprentice in the workforce, living away from home for four years or less, much like his or her white counterparts.

FAMILY STATUS OF SEPARATED CHILDREN

In a submission he co-wrote for the Human Rights Commission inquiry in 1996, Peter Read claimed the Aborigines Protection Board's use of the terms 'orphan' and 'neglected' to justify many of its removals was misleading. 'The vast majority of the children taken by the Board fitted neither category,' the submission said, 'they had mothers, fathers and other relatives who wanted to look after them.'[26] Read also contended that, in pursuit of their policy of attempted genocide, white officials used the different family relationships and child-rearing methods of Aboriginal people as one of their reasons to remove their children.

> The whites were so mesmerized by their own view of society that they could not perceive the value of alternative child raising methods, which were an integral part of the 'non-existent' black culture. One official wrote that the children of a certain woman at La Perouse should be seized because she kept leaving them with relatives for hours while she went shopping. He must have been unaware that such practices had been common since the white invasion, and probably for thousands of years before that. No granny, according to the whites, no cousin or auntie, could look after the children as well as the parents. As soon as the parents ceased to look after their children in the manner approved by officials, there was the opportunity for the children to be removed.[27]

While reading the Ward Registers, I looked out for this example from La Perouse but could not find it in any of the forms between 1907 and 1932. Read does not provide a reference for this incident or even give it a date, so I could not check the veracity of his claim. Nonetheless, there is enough data from the publicly available registers to suggest that, even if it occurred at a later date, this would have been a most unusual reason for removal. To show this, we first need to examine the family status of those children who were removed from their parents, and then look at the reasons the government officers gave for why they took the action they did.

The Ward Registers recorded the names and addresses of a child's parents, where they were known. If a parent was dead they recorded this too. They also recorded information about the child's extended family, including the names and ages of its siblings, the names and kinship of other relatives, including grandparents, aunts, uncles and

[26] Link-Up, *In the Best Interest of the Child?*, p 52
[27] Read, *Stolen Generations*, p 17

step-parents. This information allows us to compile a numerical table of the family relations of these children.

The accompanying table shows one thing fairly clearly. The majority of the separated children did not come from stable, two-parent families. Instead, they included a disproportionately high number of orphans and children from single-parent families. Table 2.4 is a record of the 631 families in the Ward Registers where there is enough information about family status to draw comparative data about family status. It records 134 orphans removed between 1907 and 1932 who comprised 21 per cent of the total. Another 209, or 33 per cent, were from single parent families. A total of 288, or 46 per cent, had two parents whose names and location were known to the board. Not all of this group were children of intact two-parent families, it should be noted, because a significant number of the forms record different addresses for the mother and father.

This profile reveals a high proportion of welfare dependency. More than half the families had no male breadwinner. One thing consistent in the history of social welfare is that welfare-dependent families, whatever their ethnic or racial background, suffer a much higher degree of family dysfunction than two-parent families with a male breadwinner. In other words, such a group profile should be expected to produce a higher number of children than normal who would need to be taken into care.

If this was so obvious, however, why didn't the authorities adopt a more culturally sensitive policy? Why didn't those responsible recognize the Aboriginal tradition of alternative child raising methods: the use of grannies, aunties, cousins and other family members who, as Read says, could look after the children just as well as parents?

The data in the Ward Registers suggests that this option was not available in the majority of cases. Although the form asked for information about other relatives, as well as parents, they record that only 231 out of 800 separated children had known relatives who could have cared for them. That is, only 29 per cent of removed children were in this position. Having said this, I should point out that this figure should not be taken as entirely reliable since it may well have reflected not the reality of Aboriginal extended family relations but a lack of information, or lack of effort, by those who filled out the forms. Nonetheless, we can at least say that this particular source of evidence does not support Read's claims about the ready availability of extended family members to provide alternative child care.

TABLE 2.4: FAMILY STATUS OF ABORIGINAL WARDS, 1907–1932

Child's family status	*Number*
Orphans	
Both parents dead (58); one parent dead, other parent unknown* (40); both parents unknown (36)	134
Children of single parents	
One parent known to be alive, and other parent either dead or unknown	209
Children of two living parents	
Both parents known to be alive	288
Extended family	
Known grandparent, aunt, uncle or step-parent	231
No recorded grandparent, aunt, uncle or step-parent	570

Source: Ward Registers, Aborigines Protection Board, State Archives of NSW. There is at least some information about the parental or family status of 759 children. However, because of the blank spaces left unfilled on the forms there is recorded information about both parents (known, dead or unknown) in only 627 cases.

* 'Unknown' means that the parent was either recorded as 'unknown' or 'not known' by whoever filled out the form, or the parent was named but his or her whereabouts were recorded as 'unknown' or 'not known' or similar. If no parent's address was recorded or that section was left blank, the parent is *not* recorded here as unknown, since blank spaces sometimes meant a form had been left incomplete rather than the information was not known at the time.

Some of the oral history on the topic supports this inference. In some cases, the death of a husband or wife could lead the surviving spouse to deposit either all or some of the children with an institution, while the remainder were left with members of the extended family. Ella Hiscocks, the matron of the Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls' Home from 1945 to 1967, recalled:

> Occasional times, a parent would bring the children. In the Smith girls' case, the father had died and the mother couldn't manage and she brought them to the Home herself. There was one family of seven, too, the Wenbergs, and the mother died. The father did it the right way and asked me to have the children. I had one of them here the other day — she came

> from Albury to see me. The aunt took the two boys and I had the other five children.[28]

In the case of orphans, it is not unreasonable to draw a firmer conclusion. Of the 134 orphans in the files, the Ward Registers record that only 35 were known to have extended family members: in most cases a grandmother. The other 99 Aboriginal orphans appeared to be completely alone in the world.

OFFICIAL REASONS FOR REMOVAL

Throughout his work, Read has said the policy of child removal was genocidal because it intended to destroy the Aborigines as a race of people. He has claimed 'welfare officers, removing children solely because they were Aboriginal, intended and arranged that they should lose their Aboriginality'.[29] He said these officers covered up their intentions with welfare euphemisms but his own investigation had seen through them:

> I at last understood that the red herrings of missionary zeal, malnutrition, parental neglect, the best interest of the child and the standards of the day, concealed a violent and premeditated attack not only on Aboriginal family structure but on the very basis of Aboriginality itself.[30]

In some places, however, he said the Ward Registers openly revealed the real motives of those in charge. Read wrote:

> The racial intention was obvious enough for all prepared to see, and some managers cut a long story short when they came to that part of the committal notice 'Reason for Board taking control of the child'. They simply wrote 'for being Aboriginal'.[31]

This is a serious misrepresentation. Those who take Read's advice to consult the Ward Registers will take a long time, and have to go through some 602 files, before they come to that phrase. Only one official ever wrote a phrase like this. His actual words were 'Being an Aboriginal'. Two others possibly indicated something similar, writing simply the word 'Aboriginal' in the space. That is, out of a total of 800 cases, only three files used a term that Read implied was commonplace.[32]

[28] Recorded in Merryl-Leigh Brindley, The Home on the Hill: The Story Behind the Cootamundra Girls' Home, MA (Aboriginal Studies) thesis, University of South Australia, 1994, pp 144–5

[29] Read, 'Clio or Janus?', p 57

[30] Read, *Rape of the Soul*, p 47

[31] Read, *Stolen Generations*, p 6

[32] The three files are numbers 554, 595 and 602 in Aborigines Welfare Board, Ward Registers 18 January 1916–7 December 1928, State Archives

As Chapter One noted, the *Bringing Them Home* report did not bother to do any of its own research into these files. Instead it simply followed Read. The first reason it gave why children were removed was 'for being Aboriginal'. It quoted verbatim the passage above from Read's *Stolen Generations* pamphlet, and then went on to list a small number of the other reasons given by the Aborigines Protection Board:

> Apart from just 'being Aboriginal', other commonly cited reasons for removal were 'To send to service', 'Being 14 years', 'At risk of immorality', 'Neglected', 'To get away from surroundings of Aboriginal station/Removal from idle reserve life' and 'Orphan'.[33]

The report's authors never treated these last reasons seriously enough to investigate how often they were given, what they meant, or whether they justified removal. The report took the lead given by Read, who had treated such reasons as trumped-up pretexts for the principal agenda. 'Almost always,' Read said, 'there was more to the story than the official version.' To illustrate this, he extracted two case studies from the records. Again, Read did not cite his sources so others could check his accuracy. Nonetheless, he wrote:

> One family lost seven children to the Board all at once, and the reason was put down to the fact that the parents had deserted their children. The story the mother told was this: she had gone on a holiday and left the children in the care of their grandmother. Food was short, and the grandmother applied for food relief, as the mother herself had done frequently. The welfare officer heard of the case, and the children were removed.
>
> Another justification was that it was in the children's own interest to be taken. Two beds for six children, food kept in a suitcase, an unweeded garden were taken as signs that the parents were incompetent. In one case a relative offered to look after four committed children. A policeman (a probationary constable) visited the home, and his report ran, 'Mrs... agreed that she did not have sufficient accommodation to look after the extra children.' Comment is scarcely necessary on the status of the woman's agreement.[34]

Since we are dealing with the activities of a significant number of public servants employed in this field for more than half a century,

of New South Wales, CGS 26, 4/8553–4, SR Reel 2793. In a debate with Read at the national conference of the History Teachers' Association of Australia on 3 October 2007, I asked him how often this reason was given. He confessed that probably 'only two' officials had ever used the term 'for being Aboriginal'.

[33] *Bringing Them Home*, pp 41–2

[34] Read, *Stolen Generations*, pp 19–20

before dismissing them as heartless monsters we ought to at least record what they said themselves about why they acted as they did. Not one of the historians of this issue has ever given even a perfunctory account of their reasons in their own words.

The forms of the Ward Registers had a space five lines long to record the reason or reasons for assuming control of a child. It was filled out either by the manager of an Aboriginal station, by a police officer at an Aboriginal reserve, or by a clerk in the Aborigines Protection Board offices in Macquarie Street, Sydney, working from a letter or notification sent by an officer in the field. Table 2.5 is an analysis of the reasons given for the 800 children removed between 1907 and 1932 for whom there are records. Where feasible, I have retained the key original words used (although almost all reasons on the forms were given at more length than here), and have grouped them into three categories: (i) negative reasons aimed at changing or preventing a bad outcome for the child; (ii) health and other welfare reasons, or those related to diseases, disabilities, institutional care and bureaucratic regulations; and (iii) positive reasons aimed at improving the life chances, education or employment prospects of a child.

Read claims these reasons must be spurious. Following this lead, the chair of Reconciliation Australia, Fred Chaney, has asserted that all the government records of the time were 'faked'.[35] However, their sheer diversity makes this hard to believe. If there really was a concerted policy or a central agenda, we would expect to find a small number of bureaucratic terms that all officials routinely employed. This would have been an administrative imperative if a policy was to operate consistently, with a shifting operational staff, over the 50 to 60 years Read said it lasted. Read identified two terms that he said performed this function. Up to 1939, he said the preferred term was 'neglected'. The change in the Act that year led the bureaucratic vocabulary to add 'uncontrollable', after magistrates demonstrated a reluctance to act on the charge of neglect alone.[36] But while these two terms certainly figure prominently in the Ward Registers, they are a long way short of the majority.

Indeed, given the limited space available to the officials, what stands out is the very wide range of reasons they chose to give. If Read's thesis is correct, they must all have been 'red herrings of missionary zeal', that is, diversions designed to conceal the true objective. But if there were so many of them, if they suggested such a diversity of motives, and if they were recorded by many different

[35] Fred Chaney, interview, ABC Television, 13 February 2008, during coverage of the Rudd government's apology to the Stolen Generations

[36] Read, *Stolen Generations*, p 7

TABLE 2.5: REASONS GIVEN BY ABORIGINES PROTECTION BOARD FOR REMOVAL OF CHILDREN, ALL AGES, 1907–1932

Reason	*Number of times stated*
Negative reasons	
Neglected	113
Orphan	73
Without proper parental care and control, or parents unfit to control child	52
Child in moral danger; mother leading immoral life	28
Uncontrollable child	26
Poor or undesirable surroundings	21
Destitute, no means of support	14
Parent(s) incapable of caring for child	13
To remove child from Aboriginal station, or from reserve	12
Death of a parent	11
Parent unable to support child any longer	11
Child abandoned or deserted	9
Homeless, or no place of abode	8
Separation of parents	7
Nomadic life of child, or family	5
Parents alcoholics	4
To remove child from camp life	4
For child's self-protection	4
For being Aboriginal	3
To remove child from life of idleness on reserve	3
Unprotected child	3
Child committed a crime	2
Likely to lapse into a life or vice and crime, or exhibiting criminal tendencies	2
Mother deceased and grandmother too old to care for child	2
Child crippled	1
Child cruelly treated	1
Mother undesirable person to have control of child	1
Not attending school	1
No responsible guardian	1
Child would not behave at school or on the mission	1

Continued over page

Table 2.5 continued

Health and other welfare reasons	
Request of State Children's Relief Board	53
Mental problems of parent	14
Child too old to remain on Aboriginal station	6
Health problem or disability of child	3
Manager of Aboriginal station's request	2
Mental problems of child	1
Mother's illness	1
Positive reasons	
To go into apprenticeship or employment*	173
Better conditions of living, or to improve child's conditions of living	62
To go into education or training	52
Parent's request	30
Child's own welfare	13
Child had finished school, or could no longer be sent to school	6
Child's own request	4
To allow mother to go to work or remain in job	2
Relative's request	1
To gain protection of board while living away from home	1

Source: Ward Registers, Aborigines Protection Board, State Archives of NSW. This is a summary of the reasons given for the board assuming control of the child. At least one reason was given on the forms of 674 out of 800 children. On 191 of these 674 forms two reasons were given. Both reasons are included in the tallies in the table.

* Note that this is the reason given for the child's removal, whereas Tables 2.2 and 2.3 record the actual destination of the child, which was recorded separately on the Ward Register form.

officials and police throughout rural New South Wales over the 25 years for which we have records, it is not easy to believe they derived from a single agenda. At face value, they seem to be responses to the real world experiences of the children concerned. They suggest plausible reasons why people responsible for Aboriginal welfare would feel these children needed help.

Moreover, the fact that a substantial proportion of the forms offered *no* welfare reason why a child was apprenticed only confirms this picture. If there really had been a conspiracy to cloak a policy of

genocide within welfare terminology, one would have expected almost all removed children to be given some kind of welfare classification. But those cases listed as 'positive reasons' in Table 2.5 suggest those who filled out these forms were usually frank about the reasons involved. Positive reasons were given on 45 per cent of all the forms, compared to the 55 per cent that bore negative or health and welfare reasons. In most of the 'positive' cases, the officials who filled out the forms were saying that these children suffered no disadvantage worth recording and had been sent from a reserve to an apprenticeship or a job simply because the position was available. On the evidence of these forms, there is no good reason to disbelieve them.

NEGLECTED CHILDREN AND ORPHANS

If the great majority of the Aboriginal teenagers who became wards of the board were sent into employment, why were the minority of younger children removed? As Table 2.6 reveals, the two principal reasons were because they were neglected and because they were orphans. This was true both for very young children as well as those in the primary school ages.

Orphans, as defined above, were children both of whose parents were dead, or one was dead and the other unknown to the authorities, or both parents were unknown. Neglected children were defined under the Neglected Children and Juvenile Offenders Act of 1905, which applied to all children in New South Wales. 'Neglected' applied to those having no visible means of support or no fixed abode, who slept in the open air, who without reasonable excuse were not provided with sufficient and proper food, nursing, clothing, medical aid or lodging, whose parents were habitual drunkards, or who were living under such conditions as to indicate that they were lapsing into a career of vice and crime. The Aborigines Protection Act of 1909 adopted this standard child welfare definition of the meaning of neglected and it thereafter formed the basis of the Aborigines Protection Board's own determinations about the status of children.

Babies to 5-year-olds: The majority of neglected Aboriginal children in this age group were removed not by the Aborigines Protection Board but by the State Children's Relief Board. There were seventeen children in this category. To be taken into care by the latter authority, they had to be declared neglected at a hearing before a magistrate where sufficient evidence was presented to sustain the charge. The State Children's Relief Board normally sent them to either the Singleton or Bomaderry homes, but in a small number of cases where the children suffered a chronic disease they were initially sent to state

TABLE 2.6: REASONS FOR REMOVAL OF ABORIGINAL CHILDREN AGED 0 TO 12, 1907–1932

Reason for removal	*Number*
Ages 0 to 5	
Neglected: determined by State Children's Relief board and later transferred to Aborigines Protection Board	17
Neglected: determined by Aborigines Protection Board	12
Orphans	10
Mental illness of parent	6
At parent's request	6
Death of a parent	5
Parent incapable of caring for child	5
Other reasons — various	18
Ages 6 to 12	
Neglected: determined by Aborigines Protection Board	45
Neglected: determined by State Children's Relief Board and later transferred to Aborigines Protection Board	10
Orphans	13
Without proper parental care and control, or parents unfit to control child	12
At parent's request	11
Employment	9
Education and training	9
In moral danger	8
Other reasons — various	70

Source: Ward Registers, Aborigines Protection Board, State Archives of NSW.

hospitals or sanatoriums. The seventeen recorded in the Ward Registers were those who became wards of the Aborigines Protection Board after they were transferred from Singleton or Bomaderry to either the Cootamundra or Kinchela training institutions. There were also twelve children aged five years or less who the Aborigines Protection Board itself declared to be neglected. Another ten children in this age group were orphans. The other major reasons children this young were removed were: the mental illness of a parent, the parent's own request, the death of a parent, or the parent's incapability of caring for the child.

Six to 12-year-olds: The picture for this age group was similar, except the roles of the Aborigines Protection Board and the State Children's

Relief Board were reversed, with the former determining the majority of cases of neglect. Once again, the second biggest category was that of orphans. Other major reasons were: the child was without proper parental care and control, the child was removed at the parent's own request, he or she was to be given employment, education or training, or because the child was in moral danger.

The fact that the State Children's Relief Board remained active throughout this period in determining cases of neglect among Aboriginal children disproves another of the claims by Read about how this policy was administered. Both Read and his organization Link-Up claimed that between the passing of the 1915 Amending Act and the new 1940 Act, the Aborigines Protection Board and its officers had virtually uncontrolled authority to seize Aboriginal children at will.[37] However, the Ward Registers show in this period the majority of neglected children under six were still processed by non-Aboriginal child welfare authorities, as were a significant proportion of those aged six to twelve. In these cases, children continued to be brought before a Children's Court, which decided their status on the evidence before it. The same procedures were applied to neglected white children over the whole of this period.

READ'S ESTIMATE OF SEPARATIONS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Read claims there were between 45,000 and 50,000 members of the Stolen Generations. This is the figure he puts on the total number of Aboriginal children removed in Australia in the twentieth century.[38] In New South Wales, his calculation of the numbers removed comes to 5626 children. This is a figure that has long been repeated in the academic literature and in *Bringing Them Home*.[39]

Table 2.7 reproduces the data Read provided in his original *Stolen Generations* pamphlet in 1981. He saw no reason to adjust any of these figures between then and 1996 when he republished the same table in a submission to the Human Rights Commission inquiry.[40] If his tally for New South Wales was accurate, then to reach his national total of 50,000 stolen children, the other, less populous, states must have had

[37] Read, *Stolen Generations*, pp 6–7; Link-Up, *In the Best Interest of the Child?*, pp 57–8, 86

[38] Peter Read, 'How Many Separated Aboriginal Children?', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 49, 2, 2003, especially p 163 n 31

[39] For instance, Heather Goodall, '"Saving the Children": Gender and the Colonization of Aboriginal Children in NSW, 1788 to 1990', *Aboriginal Law Bulletin*, 2, 44, 1990, p 9 n 2; *Bringing Them Home*, p 36

[40] Link-Up, *In the Best Interest of the Child?*, p 31

TABLE 2.7: PETER READ'S ESTIMATES OF ABORIGINAL CHILDREN SEPARATED IN NEW SOUTH WALES, 1883–1969

1893–1909, Children placed at Warangesda dormitory and subsequently in domestic service*	300
1909–1969, Children removed under the Aborigines Protection Act	3725
1909–1916, placed by Aborigines Protection Board, 400*	
1916–1938, placed by Aborigines Protection Board, 1600	
1939–1969, Kinchela and Cootamundra homes, 925	
Denominational homes (e.g. Marella, Boystown), 300*	
Non-Aboriginal institutions (e.g. Mittagong, *Sobraon*), 200*	
Aboriginal Welfare Board foster homes, 300*	
To 1969, Children removed under Child Welfare legislation	1600
'Uncontrollable' children in non-Aboriginal institutions (e.g. Mt Penang, Parramatta), 400*	
'Delinquent' children sentenced to non-Aboriginal corrective institutions, 400*	
Lighter-caste children committed to Child Welfare Department as wards and placed in non-Aboriginal homes and foster homes, 800*	
1893–1969, Total children removed	5625

Source: Peter Read, *The Stolen Generations: The Removal of Aboriginal Children in New South Wales 1883 to 1969*, NSW Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, Sydney, 1981, p 9

* Read describes these as 'approximate figures due to lack of records'.

significantly higher removal rates. Given that the rest all had budgets far smaller than New South Wales, that has always been inherently implausible.

Except for two rows in Table 2.7 — the 1600 children placed by the Aborigines Protection Board between 1916 and 1938, and the 925 admitted to the Kinchela and Cootamundra homes from 1939 to 1969 — the figures provided were estimates made by Read because of what he said was a lack of records. Unfortunately, none of them was credible. Read's estimates were replete with exaggeration, double counting, historical error, creative definitions and fanciful guesses. Let me demonstrate:

- Read's first estimate of the 300 children sent to domestic service from the Warangesda dormitory between 1893 and 1909 is entirely fictitious. As Chapter Five shows in some detail, there was no dormitory that trained 300 girls in these skills in this period. Read misread the evidence. At most, the Warangesda dormitory's training in domestic service amounted to cooking and housekeeping classes for ten girls for the four years from 1906 to 1909. In any case, these girls could hardly be termed stolen children since their own mothers lived on the station with them.

- His second estimate, the 400 placed by the Aborigines Protection Board between 1909 and 1916, is exaggeration and double counting. The number of children placed in that period is included *within* his total of 1600 placed by the board from 1916 to 1938. As noted at the start of this chapter, even though the title of the Ward Register archive says it covers the period 1916 to 1928, it actually contains the files of another 117 children who were separated from their families between 1907 and 1916. Had Read ever examined the content of these files closely, he would have known this.[41]

- The 1600 children Read counts in the board's Ward Registers is one of only two reliable figures in the whole table. I counted 1582 names in these records.

- His total of 925 children attending the Kinchela and Cootamundra homes from 1939 to 1969 is also plausible. There is no known list of all the girls who entered the Cootamundra home but a list of the boys admitted to the Kinchela school does survive.[42] The list shows that between 1939 and 1969, some 213 boys enrolled there. Given that in New South Wales more than three times as many girls were separated as boys, then a figure of about 710 girls sent to Cootamundra over the same period would be a rough but reasonable guess.

- Read's estimates that 300 Aboriginal children were in denominational homes from 1909 to 1969, plus a further 200 in other non-Aboriginal institutions, are fanciful. There is no evidence that any

[41] The fact that this 117 (and not Read's estimate of 400) is close to the real total of those removed in this period is confirmed by the Aborigines Protection Board annual report for 1915 which says that at that time the number of girls then in apprenticeships stood at 80. (The remaining 37 wards would have been either males or girls still too young to be apprenticed.) *Report, 1915*, p 3

[42] Beverley and Don Elphick, eds, *Kinchela Aboriginal Home and School, Alphabetical List of Students*, Canberra, 1977

more than a very small number of Aborigines were ever sent to the establishments at Mittagong or the *Sobraon*. In fact, the Sydney Harbour training ship *Sobraon* was closed down as early as 1911 and it is very unlikely that any Aboriginal child was ever placed aboard it, or its predecessor the *Vernon*. These were nineteenth century sailing ships designed to train destitute and delinquent boys from inner urban areas in seamanship.[43] As Chapter Three demonstrates, Aboriginal boys were trained for rural occupations. As Table 2.2 shows, in the period 1907 to 1932 there are only two records in the Ward Registers of Aboriginal boys being sent to Mittagong. After World War II, the Mittagong cottages were used to accommodate boys convicted of criminal behaviour. No boys in this last category can be plausibly defined either as welfare cases or stolen children. Read's estimate of the number sent to denominational homes also lacks credibility. The Aborigines Welfare Board reported an average of three Aboriginal children sent each year to all types of denominational homes in the 1950s, the only decade when it sent them there.[44] This is a long way short of Read's estimate of 300.

- After World War II there is some evidence in personal memoirs of Aboriginal children being adopted as babies into white families, but the pre-war policy options for Aboriginal youth were largely confined to either apprenticeship or institutions. As Chapter Three discusses, foster homes were then the preferred destination for white children but not for black. Between 1945 and 1969, the only time the board acknowledged it fostered Aboriginal children into white homes was in 1956 and 1957, and then only for a trial period involving 30 children in the first year and an unreported number in the second year.[45] As the case of Faith Bandler's adoption of a two-tear-old Aboriginal boy in 1959 shows (see Chapter Three), there might have been a handful of additional cases. Throughout the post-war period the preferred welfare option was

[43] John Ramsland, *Children of the Back Lanes: Destitute and Neglected Children in Colonial New South Wales*, New South Wales University Press, Sydney, 1986, pp 182, 206–20

[44] The Aborigines Welfare Board recorded no children sent to denominational homes in 1952–53; 3 in 1953–54; 6 in 1954–55; 8 in 1955–56; 3 in 1956–57; 1 in 1957–58; 1 in 1958–59; and 1 in 1959–60: Aborigines Welfare Board, *Report, 1955*, p 10; *Report, 1958*, p 10; and *Report, 1961*, p 14

[45] Aborigines Welfare Board, *Report, 1956*, p 4; *Report, 1957*, p 4. This observation is confirmed by Richard Chisholm's report: *Black Children, White Welfare? Aboriginal Child Welfare Law and Policy in New South Wales*, Social Welfare Research Centre, University of New South Wales, April 1985, p 22

to foster out neglected children to Aboriginal families. No Aboriginal children placed with these families can plausibly be regarded as stolen. Read's estimate of 300 stolen children in foster homes is unwarranted.

- Read's inclusion in his table of 400 Aboriginal children removed as 'uncontrollable' and another 400 removed as 'delinquent' is a further example of the creativity he brings to the definition of 'stolen'. Most of these were young people convicted of criminal and other offences. The idea that those sentenced to detention in juvenile reformatories should somehow be regarded as 'stolen' from their families stretches the term beyond credulity.

- Read's final category of 'lighter-caste' children who might have been fostered out by the Child Welfare Department is equally illegitimate. As Chapter Three shows, there were some half-caste Aboriginal children on Aboriginal stations and reserves who looked almost white but there was no doubt that, because they had grown up on these places, they were Aborigines. Where light-coloured children were known to associate with Aborigines, the Aborigines Protection Board regarded them as its responsibility and defended its rights to act for them against other departments.[46] If these children had been removed from their communities and placed in non-Aboriginal homes and foster homes then they could potentially have deserved a place on Read's list. But Read offered no evidence at all that there were 800 children, or anything like it, in this category. On the other hand, if Read was claiming here that many Aboriginal children, who were not recognized as such, were fostered out to white families, then he had a different problem. If this was so, they should not be counted as members of the Stolen Generations.

[46] In 1953, in a case where some children were to be charged as neglected, an officer of the Aborigines Welfare Board wrote: 'Proceedings will need to be taken under the Child Welfare Act since the children are about quarter caste. So far as the Board is concerned they are aborigines and have always been associated with aborigines, but they are physically light caste. Naturally the case will need to be referred to the Child Welfare Department at this stage, but it is a case where the Board's officers should act.' Aborigines Welfare Officer to Central Office, Aborigines Welfare Board correspondence files, 17 June 1953. Ironically, this letter is quoted by Read's organization Link-Up in an attempt to show how the demeaning concept of 'caste' was still used in the 1950s, even though it contradicted Read's claims earlier in the same document that 'lighter caste' children were at this time routinely committed to the Child Welfare Department and placed in non-Aboriginal institutions: Link-Up, *In the Best Interest of the Child?*, pp 30–1, 103

> They could hardly have been removed to put an end to an Aboriginality that no one knew they had.

Elsewhere, Read has tried to inflate his numbers by claiming that the State Children's Relief Board played its own, separate role in removing Aboriginal children and placing them in institutions. He suggests that for every three Aboriginal wards of the board another two were removed by the non-Aboriginal child welfare sector.[47] However, in the period under discussion, if children in the latter sector were known to be Aboriginal, the State Children's Relief Board routinely passed them on to the Aborigines Protection Board. Tables 2.5 and 2.6 show what the surviving records reveal about their numbers. They are included in the 1600 children in the Ward Registers and should not be double-counted by giving them a separate category, as Read does.

A REALISTIC COUNT OF SEPARATIONS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

On my examination of the evidence, the total number of Aboriginal children removed in New South Wales from 1912 to 1968 was 2600. There were three distinct periods of activity, with the second somewhat more active than the other two. In the first period, predominantly from 1912 to 1928, the board separated a total of 775 children. In the second period from 1929 to 1940 it separated another 825 children. In the third period from 1941 to 1968 it separated a further 1000 children. In proportional terms, these were very small numbers. From 1912 to 1928, there were an average of 48 new separations a year or about 2 per cent of the state's approximately 2700 Aboriginal children at that time; in the second period an average of 75 new separations a year or again about 2 per cent of the state's 4000 Aboriginal children in the 1930s; and in the third period an average of 37 new separations a year, or less than 1 per cent per year of the state's 5000–7000 Aboriginal children over that period.[48]

[47] Link-Up, *In the Best Interest of the Child?*, pp 30–1, 52–3

[48] Most published Aboriginal censuses for New South Wales in the 1920s and 1930s did not provide a separate breakdown for children, but we do know that the population of children in 1912 was 2844, in 1918 was 2677, in 1937 was 4246, and in 1940 was 4734. Estimates in the text derive from these figures plus the trend change in the total population over the same timespan: Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1912*, p 21; *Report, 1918*, p 4; *Report, 1940*, p 2; Aborigines Protection: Report and Recommendations of the Public Service Board, 1940, p 11. My estimates of the number of children from 1941 to 1969 are based on population totals in 1941, 1947, 1954 and 1957, of which, if the 1941 age distribution was repeated, the proportion of children would have been 44.5 per cent: Aborigines Welfare

TABLE 2.8: ANNUAL PATTERNS OF SEPARATION OF ABORIGINAL CHILDREN IN NEW SOUTH WALES, 1912–1968

Period	*Total separations during period*	*Average separations per year*	*Annual separation rate as a proportion of all Aboriginal children in NSW*
1912–1928	775	48	2 per cent
1929–1940	825	75	2 per cent
1941–1968	1000	37	0.6 per cent

Moreover, just because these 2600 children were separated from their families does not mean any of them were stolen. Two-thirds of them were teenagers who were boarded out as apprentices for four years or less, just like many of their white counterparts, and one third of them were orphans, neglected and destitute children of twelve years of age or less whom the state had a duty to take into its care. The state rescued these latter children from neglect and abuse in their own families and communities. It was the proper thing to do.

To provide the full picture of movements in and out of its institutions and families, in the 1950s the Aborigines Welfare Board provided three tables in each annual report. Figures for three years from 1952–53 to 1954–55 are reproduced here to demonstrate how small a number were actually affected.

This was a period which the Human Rights Commission has described as a time of genocide, when it claimed that 'not one Indigenous family' was escaping the effects of forcible removal. It was a time when the Aborigines Welfare Board calculated the total Aboriginal population of New South Wales increased from 12,000 to 13,598.[49] Tables 2.9, 2.10 and 2.11 show the numerical movements of wards from 1952 to 1955.

Board, *Report, 1944–45*, p 6; *Report, 1946–77*, p 3; *Report, 1953–54*, p 12; *Report, 1956–57*, p 5. Figures for separated children are given in Aborigines Welfare Board reports each year for 1945 to 1963, except for 1950 and 1951.

[49] Aborigines Welfare Board, *Report, 1954*, p 12; *Report, 1957*, p 5

TABLE 2.9: MOVEMENT OF WARDS OF NEW SOUTH WALES ABORIGINES WELFARE BOARD, 1952–1955

	1952–53	*1953–54*	*1954–55*
Number of wards at beginning of year	171	183	194
Number admitted/committed during year ⋆	30	31	41
	201	214	235
Number discharged during year	18	20	20
Number at end of year	183	194	215

Source: NSW Aborigines Welfare Board, *Report, 1955*, p 10
⋆ An Aboriginal child could be admitted to wardship at the request of a parent or guardian, or could be committed to wardship by a Children's Court on grounds of neglect or being similarly in need of care.

TABLE 2.10: NEW PLACEMENTS OF WARDS BY NEW SOUTH WALES ABORIGINES WELFARE BOARD, 1952–1955

	1952–53	*1953–54*	*1954–55*
Kinchela Boys' Home	6	3	5
Cootamundra Girls' Home	7	1	13
Denominational homes	–	3	6
Boarded out with foster parents	17	20	13
In employment under regulated conditions	–	1	1
Otherwise placed	–	3	3
Total new placements	30	31	41

TABLE 2.11: TOTAL PLACEMENTS OF WARDS BY NEW SOUTH WALES ABORIGINES WELFARE BOARD, 1952–1955

	1952–53	*1953–54*	*1954–55*
Kinchela Boys' Home	57	54	45
Cootamundra Girls' Home	51	41	47
Denominational homes	8	11	15
Boarded out with foster parents	49	62	69
In employment under regulated conditions	18	23	29
Otherwise placed	–	3	16
Total number of wards	183	194	215*

Source: NSW Aborigines Welfare Board, *Report, 1955*, p 10
* Total for third column of Table 2.11 is inaccurate (it actually comes to 221) but this is the board's total.

Overall, these three tables show that at 30 June 1955, the Aborigines protection Board was responsible for a total of 215 wards. This represented less than 4 per cent of Aboriginal children in the state at the time, and less than 2 per cent of all Aborigines. Moreover, the tables show that growth in the system was very small. The number of committals minus the number of discharges each year was only eleven. Hence, no matter how long anyone tries to stretch the time frame or otherwise manipulate the data, the claim that all Aboriginal families were touched by the system must be untrue.

THE IMPACT OF SEPARATION ON THE ABORIGINAL POPULATION

As Chapter One recorded, although Peter Read originally claimed in 1981 that the aim of government child removal was to put an end to Aboriginal culture or 'Aboriginality', by 1999 he was arguing the ultimate objective was to end the Aboriginal race itself. By the early twentieth century, he said, expectations of the Aboriginal race 'dying out' by natural causes were not being fulfilled. Governments came to the conclusion they had to eliminate the Aborigines themselves. Read wrote: 'Their extinction, it seemed, would not occur naturally after all, but would have to be arranged.' Heather Goodall, Professor of History at the University of Technology, Sydney, shared this interpretation. In her book *Invasion to Embassy* she claimed the aim was to

physically reduce the state's Aboriginal population. 'The Board stated quite openly in its reports and minutes that it intended to reduce the birthrate of the Aboriginal population by taking adolescent girls away from their communities.'[50] Inara Walden, the curator of the Museum of Sydney, agreed the board's aims were: 'to reduce the Aboriginal birthrate and stem growing numbers of "half-caste" children.'[51]

None of these authors provided any specific reference for this charge. Nor did they offer any verbatim quotation in support of their assertion. I discuss their lack of evidence in more detail in Chapter Three. Here it is sufficient to say that any claims the board said this 'quite openly' have no basis. Historians have twisted the words of its members in order to make it look like the board was pursuing a policy to reduce the size of the Aboriginal population as a whole, which it never did.

In any case, if the board really had wanted to reduce the birthrate it failed dismally, because the opposite actually occurred. In 1915, when the state government finally granted the board's long-standing request to amend the Aborigines Protection Act to give its officers the power to contract teenagers to apprenticeships, the Aboriginal population stood at 6580. By 1930 that population had grown by 35 per cent to 8920, and by 1940, after 25 years of apprenticeships, the Aboriginal population had grown by no less than 65 per cent to 10,861.[52] This is a similar rate of growth as the white population of Australia over a similar time span, but because white numbers were supplemented by immigration, the Aboriginal population actually experienced a higher rate of natural increase. [53] In other words, we are asked to believe that the Aborigines of New South Wales suffered genocide in the midst of a boom in their own population.

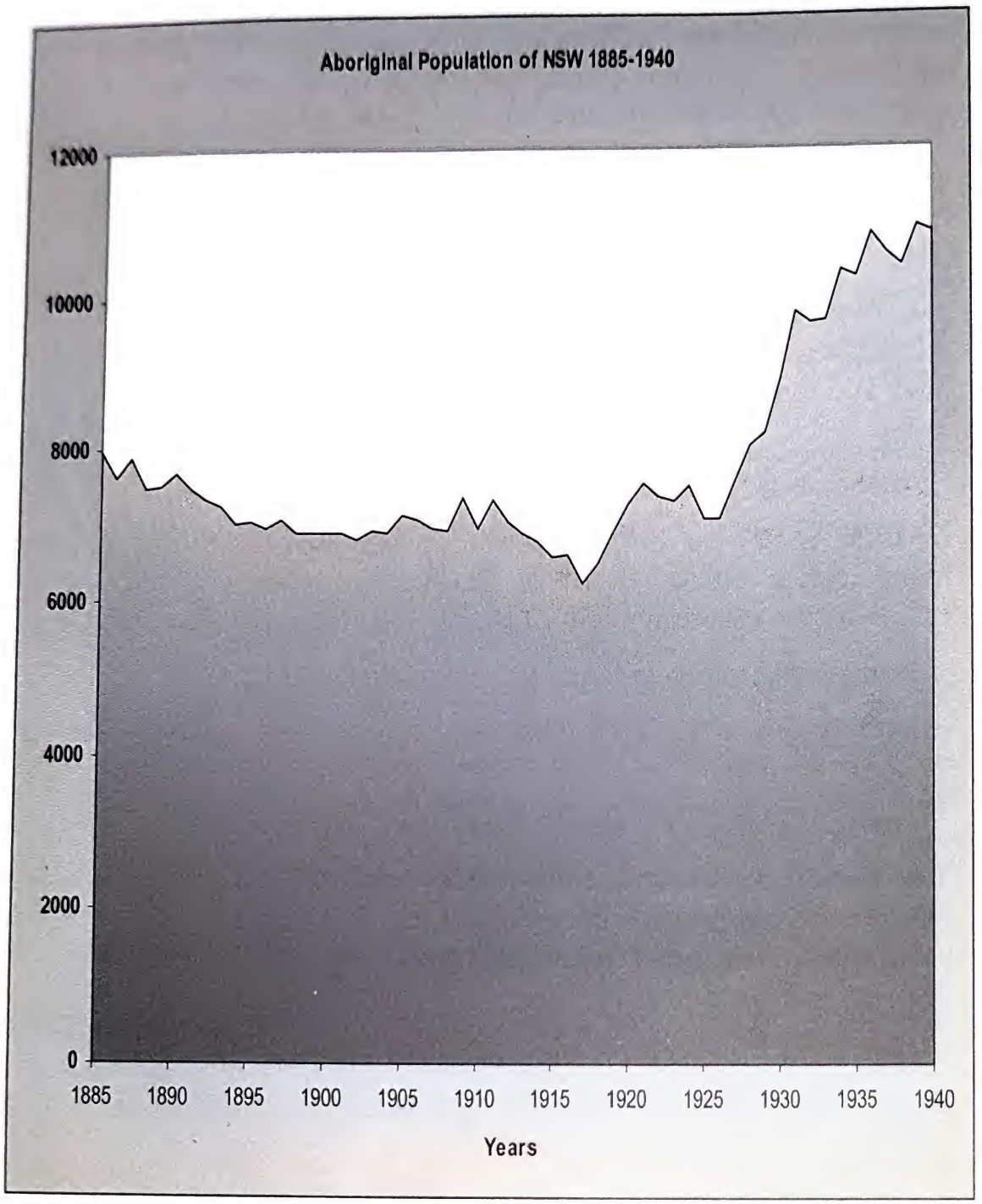
[50] Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, p 120

[51] Inara Walden, 'Step Brings Back Some Humanity', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 February 2008, p 16

[52] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1915*, p 2; *Report, 1930*, p 2; *Report, 1940*, p 2

[53] The Commonwealth census was undertaken erratically between 1901 and 1961. The closest comparisons between Aboriginal and the Australian population in this period are: NSW Aboriginal census 1915–1933, population growth 47 per cent; Commonwealth census 1911–1933, population growth 49 per cent; NSW Aboriginal census 1915–1940, population growth 65 per cent; Commonwealth census 1911–1947, population growth 70 per cent. From 1915 to 1940, net immigration increased Commonwealth population by 15 per cent. *Sources*: Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1915*, p 2; *Report, 1940*, p 2; 'Population, Colonies and States, 1828–1981', in Wray Vamplew, ed, *Australians: Historical Statistics*, Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, Sydney, 1987, pp 6–7, 26

FIGURE 2.1: ABORIGINAL POPULATION OF NEW SOUTH WALES, 1885–1940



Source: Population census, Aborigines Protection Board annual reports, 1885–1940. In two of these years, 1919 and 1927, there were no census figures published, so in these cases the numbers graphed here are the median of those of the preceding and the successive years.

BEHIND THE STATISTICS AND OFFICIAL TERMINOLOGY

For the past 25 years, academic historians have subjected the officials of the Aborigines Protection Board to a ferocious barrage of criticism. Unfortunately, the latter are all long dead and unable to respond. In order to address their critics, and do some justice to their reputations, let me elaborate some of the reasons they gave and the cases they responded to. What follows are a number of individual examples from the most commonly given reasons for the separation of Aboriginal children from their families from 1907 to 1932. They flesh out the meaning behind the categories used in Tables 2.5 and 2.6

Neglected: In some cases, the local representatives of the board, such as a station manager, policeman or reserve matron, made a decision that a child was neglected. The file of a 15-year-old girl, whose mother died and whose father's whereabouts were unknown, simply recorded:

> Mother died, father neglected the children.[54]

In 1920, a 12-year old girl whose mother was dead and who was living with a female relative at Walcha was sent to the Bomaderry Home by the superintendent of the Walcha Reserve because she was:

> Living under conditions likely to result in minimal life.[55]

Another girl was removed from the Angledool Aboriginal Station in 1921:

> Owing to neglect of mother to provide any food.[56]

The file of an 8-year-old boy, whose father was dead and whose mother had taken up with another man and had left him for three years with an unrelated couple, said he was:

> Neglected by his mother and not properly controlled and often cruelly treated by the old couple who had the care of him.[57]

Many cases of neglect, however, were decided at a Children's Court. Contrary to Read's claim that, after an amendment to the Act in 1915, magistrates were excluded from the Aboriginal removal process, serious cases of neglect were still commonly put before them throughout the 1910s and 1920s, especially when the children concerned were very young. The Ward Register files record such reasons for separation as:

[54] Ward Registers, file no. 251
[55] Ward Registers, file no. 282
[56] Ward Registers, file no. 256
[57] Ward Registers, file no. 473.

> Brought before Wollongong Bench, 11th December 1917, charged with being neglected child, committed to Cootamundra House by A. O. Edwards SM[58]

> Neglected, brought before court and committed to Cootamundra Home, wandering streets and living on wild figs, no proper food whatever.[59]

In one especially disheartening case, a woman whose husband was dead had her five children, aged from five to fourteen, taken from her at the same time. All five files bore the same entry:

> Order of Children's Court (Neglected and Uncontrollable Child) held at Blayney 4th June 1928.[60]

There were no other details recorded why this occurred but the fact that the case went before a district court judge or magistrate sitting as a children's court, and was not simply decided by a local board official, indicates there was probably enough credible evidence of parental neglect to support the decision. However, as noted earlier, Peter Read has claimed the decisions made by judges and magistrates were always culturally insensitive and often racist. If he wants to call them by these names, however, he needs to provide sufficient evidence. This he has never done. If the only evidence available is a children's court finding of neglect, historians have no good reason to assume racial or ethnic bias was present unless they can show us the counter evidence and make a case. Read gave one example of a La Perouse woman whose children were removed because she left them with others while she went shopping. On the face of it, this would seem to be one such case but, as I noted above, a check of the available records failed to find any confirmation that this example actually occurred. Even if it did, Read's wider argument of systematic racial bias amongst judges and magistrates would only be credible if he could demonstrate not just one but a series of such cases. He has done no more than assert they were racists and has never proven it in even one credible case.

Orphans: Children whose parents are dead or unknown, whatever their race, have an obvious need for welfare intervention unless they have kin prepared to care for them. As I noted earlier, the great majority of orphans in the Ward Registers had no known relatives. Even when relatives could be found, however, many were not able or willing to assume the responsibility, especially when the child was older and could enter the workforce.

[58] Ward Registers, files no. 151 and 268
[59] Ward Registers, file no. 327
[60] Ward Registers, files no. 759, 760, 761, 762 and 763

One girl whose mother was dead and father unknown had been brought up on the Goondabluie Aboriginal station by her grandmother until she was fifteen years old. When the grandmother died in 1916, and although her grandfather was still alive, the girl became a ward of the board and went to the Cootamundra home where she trained for three months. She was then employed in domestic service at Mosman, an occupation she followed for many years after, interspersed with regular short returns to Cootamundra for holidays.[61]

A boy whose parents were both dead had been brought up by his grandmother on the reserve at Collarenebri. In January 1921, when he was fourteen, the board assumed control because:

> His parents are deceased and he had no relatives able and willing to care and maintain him.[62]

His grandmother was apparently no longer prepared to look after him at this age. He was never institutionalized. The board found him a job as an apprentice on a local pastoral station.

From Read's perspective, the girl and boy described here simply count as stolen children but, given their situation as orphans, the board fulfilled its responsibility to assist them as it did.

Two boys who had been admitted when they were one and four years old to the Waterfall Sanatorium, an institution south of Sydney for the isolation of tuberculosis sufferers,[63] came to the attention of the Aborigines Protection Board in April 1925. Dr H. T. Palmer, the medical superintendent of the sanatorium, wrote the following letter:

> I have two little aboriginal boys both aged 8 years who have been fit for discharge for a long while having had no disease for several years. Their names are R... G... admitted from Condobolin 20-11-18 and W... S... admitted from Condobolin 7-1-20.
>
> Both these children are quite free from disease and I have only kept them so long to give them a better chance, but the demand for beds is so great that I must discharge them. Both are orphans. I would be much obliged if you will arrange to take charge of them during the next week.

The board's secretary, Arthur Pettit, arranged places for them at Kinchela Boys' Home. He asked one of the board's home-finders, Emmeline Rutter, to go to Waterfall to collect them from the sanatorium and bring them by train to Sydney, and he asked one of the board's inspectors, Robert Donaldson, to accompany the boys on the overnight train journey from Sydney to Kempsey. The board's

[61] Ward Registers, file no. 4

[62] Ward Registers, file no. 411

[63] Until antibiotics became widely available in Australia after World War II, those infected with tuberculosis were quarantined in separate institutions.

chairman also wrote to the senior police officer at Condobolin requesting him 'to secure as many particulars as possible regarding them'. Police Sergeant Patrick Purtell replied on 11 June 1925:

> I beg to report that I have made careful inquiries regarding the two boys R... G... and W... S..., but very little information can be obtained about them. There are no Aborigines on the reserve here who appear to know anything about the boy G..., his parents are dead and he has no relatives, and no information can be obtained from the local Registrar of Births or Deaths. The boy S...'s father is working for Mr Gavel near Condobolin, he cannot give the boy's age, only that he was four when he was sent to Waterfall, the mother is dead, and the child was born on the Reserve at Condobolin, but the birth has not been registered at Condobolin. All papers returned attached hereto.

The discovery that W.S. was not actually an orphan did not change his status and he remained a ward of the board. His father either would not or could not take him into his own care. He was possibly too ill, since two years later the board's file recorded the father had died.

This sad tale had no happy ending. Both boys remained at Kinchela until they were aged about fifteen. R.G. was subsequently sent to two positions with rural employers, while W.S. left Kinchela to live on the Aboriginal station at Toomelah in northern New South Wales. In 1935, aged eighteen, R.G. died at Tamworth Hospital from tuberculosis. In 1937, aged twenty, W.S. died at Prince Henry Hospital, Sydney, probably from the same disease.[64]

However tragic the story of these brief lives, it does not resemble the yarn spun by Peter Read. None of the government instrumentalities responsible for these boys, the Waterfall Sanatorium, the Aborigines Protection Board or the Condobolin police, acted as if they had the agenda Read prescribed for them. The boys were not removed in order to deny them their Aboriginal culture, but to save their lives from a fatal disease. The sanatorium provided the boys with generous treatment for their disease. When it learned about them, the board took them into its care and immediately tried to find any relatives they might have. The police conducted a proper investigation and succeeded in finding one of the boys' fathers. After about seven years at Kinchela, the board organized employment for one boy and sent the other one back to an Aboriginal community. Under the circumstances, all these institutions did their duty.

[64] Ward Registers, files no. 544 and 545. At the time, Prince Henry Hospital (or the Coastal Hospital) was in an isolated location at Little Bay, Sydney, and took patients requiring quarantine, including those with tuberculosis: http://www.sesahs.nsw.gov.au/POWH/Historical/henryhistory.asp

Without proper parental care and control: Many of those made wards for this reason were in much the same situation as orphans. The board assumed control of a 6-year-old boy in 1926 because:

> Mother dead, and father wandering about and not taking care of the child.

This boy had been living with its mother at Goodooga until she died, while his father was a stockman on a nearby pastoral station. The file remarked: 'No other relatives known.'[65] A 5-year-old girl became a ward and was sent to the Bomaderry home in 1927 for the reason:

> Relatives unable to care for her.

Her file shows that her mother was dead, her father unknown and she had been brought up by her grandmother at Sevington, near Glen Innes.[66] A 13-year-old boy in the same position was made a ward in 1927 because he was:

> Not under proper control, and not attending school.

His mother was dead, his father unknown, and he had grown up in his grandmother's care at Burnt Bridge, northern New South Wales. In this case, the board clearly wanted to remove him from the influences where he grew up because it decided not to send him to Kinchela 'which was considered too near Burnt Bridge'. While the file did not spell out what this meant, the objective could not have been to remove him entirely from Aboriginal culture since the first place the board sent him to was Brungle Aboriginal Station, followed in 1929 by Quirindi Aboriginal Station.[67]

In moral danger: This term was used only for girls. It was often accompanied by comments that condemned a girl not so much for sexual promiscuity as for her prospect of descending into prostitution. The forms indicated the difference by the terms '*career* of vice' and '*life* of immorality'. In an era when sexually transmitted diseases were often incurable, when gonorrhoea rendered women infertile and long-term syphilis could be fatal, what weighed equally with sexual morality on the minds of officials was public health. Moreover, this policy was applied just as severely to white girls in inner city slums as to Aboriginal girls in outback camps and reserves. As late as the 1950s, teenage white girls caught selling sexual favours, or even those strongly suspected by social workers of doing so, could be arrested and charged with being in moral danger. Engaging in or being suspected

[65] Ward Registers, file no. 624
[66] Ward Registers, file no. 689
[67] Ward Registers, file no. 653

of prostitution also breached court-ordered probation and good behaviour bonds and could earn a white girl a term in a correctional institution.[68] Examples of this terminology applied to Aboriginal girls were:

A 16-year-old girl from Pelican Island removed in 1921 because:

> Not under proper care and control, wandering about at night and not following any regular occupation. Likely to relapse into a career of vice.[69]

A 12-year-old girl living with her single mother at a camp near Coonabarabran removed in 1922 for the reason:

> That the existing conditions under which she was living would lead to a life of immorality.[70]

A 14-year-old girl, who lived with her father and adult brother at Burnt Bridge until her father died in 1927, was removed because:

> Both parents are deceased, she was neglected and living under conditions that would lead to a career of vice and crime.[71]

There were also cases in this category where a girl's mother had moved in with a new man who the local official believed was a sexual predator of the daughter. At Terry Hie Hie Station in 1924, the manager sent a 15-year-old girl to a job in Sydney primarily:

> To remove from the immoral influence of her stepfather.[72]

Mother leading an immoral life: At the time, child welfare authorities routinely removed children from mothers who were prostitutes, whether they were black or white. In today's climate of permissive sexual morality this might seem unjust but until the 1960s there was a social consensus that a woman in that occupation was unfit to rear children.[73]

In the Ward Registers, examples include the following removals of Aboriginal children. A 15-year-old girl was sent to Cootamundra in 1916 because:

[68] Donald McLean, *Children in Need: An Account of the Administration and Functions of the Child Welfare Department, New South Wales, Australia, With an Examination of the Principles Involved in Helping Deprived and Wayward Children*, Government Printer, Sydney, 1956, especially Chapter V, 'Field Work'

[69] Ward Registers, file no. 227

[70] Ward Registers, file no. 304

[71] Ward Registers, file no. 703

[72] Ward Registers, file no. 358

[73] McLean, *Children in Need*, Chapter V

> Mother living an immoral life at Mineral Hill. Child absolutely neglected.[74]

A 13-year-old girl from Queensland, described as 'roaming about in mothers care' and often travelling with her mother from Moree to outlying districts, was made a ward in 1922 on the grounds:

> Mother an alleged prostitute, father an unknown white man.[75]

In 1927, two brothers aged nine and eleven years whose father was dead were sent to Kinchela for the following reason:

> Neglected. Mother drinking and living with four different men.[76]

Uncontrollable: Read wrote in *The Stolen Generations* that 'uncontrollable' was a term brought into use in 1939 after the Act changed and magistrates were again introduced to determine whether children could be removed. However, the Ward Registers have at least 26 examples of this reason being given between 1907 and 1932. It was usually used when a child was found breaking the law. In some cases it was applied to girls engaged in prostitution. Removal by the board was seen as a preventative measure to stop a child from entering a life of crime and vice, such as in the case of a 16-year-old boy from Collarenebri, who accompanied his itinerant father working on various pastoral stations in that district. The reason for his removal in 1922 was:

> Out of control of his father, exhibiting criminal tendencies.[77]

Similarly, a 13-year-old boy from Pelican Island was made a ward in 1921 for:

> Not being under proper control being a suspected thief, and likely to lapse into a career of vice and crime.[78]

In other cases, persistent truancy from school was seen in the same light and the board was seen as the remedy. In 1928, a 13-year-old girl was made a ward for this reason:

> Committed by the Magistrate Children's Court Uralla to Cootamundra House, being uncontrollable, refusing to attend school when sent by Guardian, Mrs M...'.

In light of the misconceptions spread by Read, it should be recorded that this girl's guardian was not a board official or a white foster

[74] Ward Registers, file no. 58
[75] Ward Registers, file no. 302
[76] Ward Registers, files no. 630 and 631
[77] Ward Registers, file no. 483
[78] Ward Registers, file no. 454

parent but her own grandmother. The girls' parents had abandoned her. Her file recorded her father was 'said to be living with another Aborigine, address unknown, supposed Woolbrook', while her mother was recorded: 'address unknown, disappeared with another man'.[79]

In some cases, 'uncontrollable' referred to children suffering from some apparent psychological disturbance. In 1921, a 9 year old girl from Delegate, whose mother was dead and who was in her father's care, became a ward:

> At the request of father of child on grounds that the child was in a measure uncontrollable and likely to come to some harm. Step mother having no sympathy or love for the child.

The girl went to the Cootamundra home and from there into service. When her first employer declared her unsatisfactory, the board sought to return her to her father. Her file recorded:

> Father asked to take charge but refused to have anything more to do with her.[80]

In another case, a mother originally from the Warangesda Aboriginal Station who moved to the Sydney suburb of Dulwich Hill, had placed her infant daughter with a Mrs Finn of Cabramatta, Sydney. In August 1928, when the girl was fourteen, she became a ward of the board and was sent to the Cootamundra home:

> Handed over by mother as becoming uncontrollable and subject to outbursts of temper.

In January 1929 the board returned the girl to Mrs Finn to become an apprenticed employee. This obviously did not work because in May that year the mother organized for her daughter to enter a Catholic convent. The file recorded:

> Mother wished her to go there as she could not be controlled and feared for her future.

Attached to the file is a letter to the board from the mother confirming the new arrangement:

> I hereby of my own freewill and accord agree to my daughter E... W... being removed from the employ of Mrs Finn of 'Bonnie Rigg', Post Office, via Liverpool, and I desire that she be admitted to the Convent of the Good Shepherd, Victoria Street, Ashfield, where she will be under proper regular supervision and receive religious instruction.

[79] Ward Register, file no. 755
[80] Ward Register, file no. 254

> Upon discharge from the Convent at the end of two years I would like her to re-enter the employ of Mrs Finn, if same could then be arranged.
>
> Owing to my daughter having become uncontrollable I think it in her best interests that she be transferred to the institution above mentioned.[81]

Poor or undesirable surroundings: In the 1920s, the majority of the more than 3000 Aboriginal children in New South Wales were living in tents and shanties, that is, in surroundings that white officials could well have designated 'undesirable' if they really had the agenda Read has given them. But that description appears to have been reserved for cases where the physical surroundings were likely to promote a child's propensity for criminal or sexual misbehaviour. It was also a category more often mentioned as a secondary reason than the main one, such as the 17-year-old girl, whose father was unknown, removed from Pelican Island in 1917 because:

> Her mother paid no attention to her, and her associates were sure to lead her into trouble.[82]

Similarly, a 14-year-old boy was removed in 1924:

> In order that his training may be completed, and that he be kept away from undesirable companions.[83]

In 1925, a 16-year-old girl who had left her family at Wallaga Lake to go to Bega in search of work was located with another family and removed by the board:

> To better condition of living; Found to be living in a one roomed hut at Bega, occupied also by an Aboriginal named Dan and his wife and three boys ages 14 to 19 years. Hut without furniture of any description, occupants all sleeping on floor. Girl had not done any work since going to Bega two months before.[84]

Destitute: This term was usually reserved for children in especially dire circumstances. For example, two girls aged ten and fourteen were made wards of the board in 1916. The board's files gave their reason for removal simply as:

> Mother homeless.

However, their case history recorded on the files and attachments revealed their plight. Their father was dead and their mother was admitted to the Waterfall Sanatorium for tuberculosis sufferers in 1915. Apart from two brothers, aged fifteen and five, they had no

[81] Ward Registers, file no. 776
[82] Ward Registers, file no. 124
[83] Ward Registers, file no. 523
[84] Ward Registers, file no. 547

known relatives. The four children were sent to cottage homes of the State Children's Relief Board at Mittagong and Parramatta from 1914 to 1916. The Aborigines Protection Board made wards of the girls in 1916 and sent them to Cootamundra. The older girl went into service in 1918 when she was sixteen years old. The younger girl returned to State Children's Relief Board care, and was recorded as employed in 1925. It would be very difficult for anyone to claim these were stolen children. Their situation was desperate and both the government boards established for the care of children like them were simply fulfilling responsibilities they had whether the children were white or black.

The files of other children in this position tell a similar story. The board's reason for making a ward of a fourteen-year-old girl from Coraki in 1916 was as follows:

> Father a white man, known as Pieman Henry, was deceased. Mother full blood Aborigine died at Grafton Hospital. Child left destitute, so board assumed control.[85]

A 14-year-old girl, one of six children of a couple from Walcha, was placed in the Aborigines Inland Mission home at Singleton in 1910 because:

> Parents unable to support, being destitute. Police asked for her to be taken into the Home at Singleton.[86]

In 1922, the board made a ward of a 17-year-old girl from Walgett whose mother had died and whose father was working at Lightning Ridge. She was described as:

> In destitute circumstances and requiring assistance.

The board placed her as an apprentice on a pastoral station and by the time she was twenty she had permanent employment on another property and was receiving her own wages.[87]

Parents incapable of caring for child: A common reason why parents were deemed incapable of caring for a child occurred when a mother died, her child was placed temporarily in a relative's care but the father proved either unable or unwilling to care for the child himself. For instance, in 1921 a 15-year-old girl from Roseby Park Station, who had been in the care of her grandmother since her mother's death, was sent to Cootamundra because:

> Father not maintaining the child.[88]

[85] Ward Registers, file no. 93
[86] Ward Registers, file no. 95
[87] Ward Registers, file no. 493

In 1921, a girl who had been cared for by her grandmother on Sevington reserve was sent to Bomaderry house because:

> Mother died, father unable to provide care.[89]

In 1923, a 6-year-old girl from the Griffith district went to Cootamundra because she:

> Had no mother, in a camp with her father who was not looking after her properly.[90]

A further type of case was that of a mother, separated from her husband, who placed her child in care because she held a full-time job. In 1910, a girl from Walcha became a ward when she was four years old because:

> Mother left her husband and went to service, and J... admitted Singleton Home to be cared for.[91]

For being Aboriginal: In the only three cases which bear some resemblance to Peter Read's case that children were removed 'for being Aboriginal', the children concerned were not sent to institutions. They were among the many for whom the board acted as an employment agency. One was a 14-year-old boy from Pilliga Aboriginal Station whose father was a station hand, whose mother was dead, and for whom the board arranged an apprenticeship on a pastoral station in 1925.[92] The other two were of 14- and 15-year-old girls from Euraba Aboriginal Station whose parents were alive and known to the board. It placed them in 1925 and 1926, respectively, into jobs in rural households.[93]

Anyone who closely examines these three forms in the Ward Registers will find the first two of them, which give the reason for removal simply as 'Aboriginal', are unsigned and they look more like incomplete clerical entries than evidence of an 'obvious enough' racial objective. The third form, for the 15-year-old girl from Euraba Station, was signed by P. Nowland, manager of that station, indicating that he wrote the phrase 'Being an Aboriginal'. Nowland signed several other forms of this kind but never used that phrase again. In New South Wales, this sole form is the only piece of genuinely direct evidence of the purported official policy to steal children because they were Aboriginal. In this case, however, the girl concerned was not

[88] Ward Registers, file no. 252
[89] Ward Registers, file no, 257
[90] Ward Registers, fie no. 351
[91] Ward Registers, file no. 204
[92] Ward Registers, file no. 554
[93] Ward Registers, files no. 595 and 602

'stolen' for very long. She was apprenticed to a white family in Moree, the nearest large town to the Euraba station, and she worked for them for three years until she turned eighteen in 1929. Her file records that on 6 June that year she attended the Church of England at Moree where she married an Aboriginal man. The notion that her brief career as a ward of the board was part of a plot to erase her Aboriginal identity defies credibility. Hence, even the solitary individual removed for 'being an Aboriginal' cannot seriously be claimed to have been a stolen child.

Apprenticeship or employment: As recorded earlier, the biggest single group of children made wards were aged thirteen, fourteen and fifteen years, and they were sent immediately into employment, usually as apprentices. Most in this category had two parents alive and known to the board. Nonetheless, there was also a sizeable group of children of single parents, who had at least one parent either dead or whereabouts unknown. Reading the Ward Registers, the reasons why these children were sent to employment seem, on the face of it, obvious enough and perfectly reasonable. Many were simply old enough to join the workforce and the officials who filled out their forms clearly thought this was sufficient explanation:

> Being over the age of fourteen years.[94]
>
> The girl having attained the age of earning her own living.[95]
>
> Of an age to go to service and a very big girl.[96]
>
> She is over school age and the matron recommended that she should obtain a situation.[97]

Another common reason was that there were no jobs available in the local district and the board could arrange work further afield:

> This girl could not get a position locally, and she was anxious to get a position. She has no real home.[98]
>
> Could not get employment in Belbrook district.[99]

In a number of cases, employment was seen as preferable to the alternative prospects of remaining unemployed on the Aboriginal station or reserve:

[94] Ward Registers, file no. 97
[95] Ward Registers, file no. 190
[96] Ward Registers, file no. 331
[97] Ward Registers, file no. 729
[98] Ward Registers, file no. 255
[99] Ward Registers, file no. 355

> On attaining 14 years was apprenticed for his benefit and remove him from idle life on reserve.[100]
>
> To take her from surroundings of Aboriginal Station and fit her for service.[101]
>
> She being of an age when in her interest it was better for her to be apprenticed than remain on Aboriginal station.[102]

Better conditions of living: Apprenticeship and employment were seen by the officials who administered the program as a positive good. Employment and 'bettering' a child's 'condition of living' were seen to go hand in hand and many of the reasons given for removal linked the two:

> Having attained the age of 14 yrs and it is desired that the child be apprenticed for her own interests.[103]
>
> To send to service and thus better condition of living.[104]

Education or training: Giving children the opportunity to better themselves was also the principal objective of them to be educated and trained. The typical reasons for sending girls to the Cootamundra home emphasised this positive outcome.

> To better condition of living and train for service.[105]
>
> To better her condition and send to situation under Board.[106]
>
> To better condition of living by undergoing course of domestic training.[107]

In a small number of other cases, this reason was linked to a negative view of Aboriginal camp life:

> To have advantage of proper training and be protected against the risk of going to the bad, which existed while she remained with her parents on the Reserve.[108]

Parents' own request: The board acted *in loco parentis* for those it apprenticed. It approved their employers, arranged their accommodation, received and banked their wages, and generally took on the role

[100] Ward Registers, file no. 419
[101] Ward Registers, file no. 14
[102] Ward Registers, files no. 35, 36 and 40
[103] Ward Registers, file no. 214
[104] Ward Registers, file no 267
[105] Ward Registers, file no. 181
[106] Ward Registers, file no. 187
[107] Ward Registers, file no. 305
[108] Ward Registers, file no. 199

of guardian. Hence, many Aboriginal parents were grateful to have this kind of supervision of children aged from thirteen to fifteen when they left home for the first time. In other words, rather than an agency that stole their children, many parents saw the board as their absent children's protector in an unfamiliar world. In the categories above where removal was for employment or education, a number of examples indicated parental attitudes of that kind. When a 14-year-old girl from Brungle station was offered a position in Sydney in 1928 her file simply recorded,

> Desired to enter employment under Board.[109]

Later that year, the reason the board made a ward of a 15-year-old girl from the same station was:

> Mother desired her daughter to be properly trained and apprenticed by the A. P. Board.[110]

However, there were other issues related more to child welfare, which also led parents to request the board's intervention. The death of a mother was a reason why some fathers requested the board to assume control of their children, even though other family members had previously been involved in their upbringing. In 1927, a 7-year-old girl whose mother was dead and who had been living with her uncle while her father worked as a miner in Queensland, was sent to the Bomaderry Home for the reason:

> Death of mother. On application of father on authority of A. P. Board.[111]

In 1927, a girl who had been brought up throughout her school years by her grandparents in camps around Emmaville and Inverell became a ward and was apprenticed out by the board because:

> Girl had no mother and was placed under control of the Board by request from her father.[112]

The illness of a parent sometimes produced the same request. A 4-year-old girl from Walhalla was sent to Cootamundra in 1917 because her father was dead and her mother had been admitted, paralysed, to Newington Hospital, Sydney.[113] In 1923, a brother and sister from Collarenebri, aged six and eight years, were sent to Cootamundra because:

[109] Ward Registers, file no. 738
[110] Ward Registers, file no. 769
[111] Ward Registers, file no. 694
[112] Ward Registers, file no. 699
[113] Ward Registers, file no. 217

> Mother in hospital, father asked for [him, her] to be taken charge of by the board.[114]

In 1928, a 2-year-old boy from La Perouse was sent to the Bomaderry Home:

> At request of parents. Mother ill in Coast Hospital and unable to arrange care.[115]

The Coast Hospital was the old name for Prince Henry Hospital, an institution at Little Bay, Sydney, caring largely for patients with tuberculosis and other diseases requiring isolation on public health grounds.

In other cases, parents requested the board take care of a child who was disabled, in poor health or with behavioural and psychological problems.[116] In 1921, an Aboriginal police tracker approached the board to assume control of his 12 year old daughter whose mother was dead. The board took control:

> At request of father of child, on grounds that the child was in a measure uncontrollable and likely to come to some harm.[117]

In this case, the father accompanied the girl to the Cootamundra Home. Four years later, she returned to his care.

PREJUDICES AND GOOD INTENTIONS

If Peter Read is right then all of the above reasons are spurious. They were all invented by their individual authors as part of an underlying policy to eradicate Aboriginality. In arguing that this is self-evidently untrue, I am not claiming that every reason given above was entirely selfless and charitable. There were some officials who were clearly prejudiced against particular Aboriginal parents and allowed this to colour their judgement. There were others who clearly had a low opinion of Aborigines as a race of people.

This is more evident, and probably more understandable, in the cases of police stationed near some reserves whose most common contact with Aborigines was when they broke the law. Charles Rowley's observation in the 1960s when he was researching his book *Outcasts in White Australia* (1971) was no doubt true of some officials in the early twentieth century also:

[114] Ward Registers, files no. 329 and 396
[115] Ward Registers, file no. 800
[116] Ward Registers, files no. 99, 314, 512 and 649
[117] Ward Registers, file no. 245

> I have myself known Aboriginal parents who believed that some officers have used the threat to 'take' children as a disciplinary measure; in fact, I have been mistaken for an officer of a State administration on the execution of such a mission, and treated accordingly.[118]

Some of these prejudices came across in the correspondence between officials and the board. For instance, in 1925 a girl from Walgett was placed in the foster care of a schoolteacher and his wife. The girl was attending the state school near Stanthorpe on the Queensland border. The girl's mother wrote to the teacher asking that she be returned to her when she had finished her schooling. The teacher asked the board to clarify the position and the board made enquiries to the police about the fitness of the mother to take the girl back. A constable from Lightning Ridge wrote the following character reference:

> I beg to report that E... L... FB Aborigine, the mother of the child J... M... mentioned in these papers is at present residing at Walgett. The mother of the child J... M... is a low caste type of Aboriginal and is regarded as a common gin in the camps of this district. On this account it would be a menace to the childs future welfare, to be sent back to the Mother E... L..., on the completion of her apprenticeship. Papers forwarded to Walgett Police for the completion of the attached form.

The sergeant of police at Walgett forwarded the above note to the board and added his own endorsement:

> On no consideration should this girl be allowed to return to her mother at the present time.[119]

It is not clear just what the constable meant by 'common gin'. He might have been employing a euphemism for prostitute but it fairly clearly represented a racial and moral prejudice on his part. The same was probably true of the comments made by another police constable stationed at Moree in 1925 who had a 15-year-old boy sent into the care of the manager at the Brewarrina Aboriginal Station. He did this even though the boy came from a large and well-established local extended family and had a recent history of casual employment as a drover and burr cutter. The constable's reasons were:

> He was not under proper control of his parents. Was allowed to wander in the street at night and would chase and catch hold of girls, a practice he probably picked up from attending picture shows.[120]

[118] C. D. Rowley, *Outcasts in White Australia: Aboriginal Policy and Practice, Volume II*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1971, p 56
[119] Ward Registers, file no. 563
[120] Ward Registers, file no. 565

If the boy had been seriously assaulting these girls, he should have been charged with that offence, but the misbehaviour described here clearly did not warrant removing him from his family. (Note also, however, that in this case the boy was not sent to an institution but to another Aboriginal community.)

Some of the board's own officials acted at times as if they were taking advantage of their authority to get back at parents who had defied them. Just three months after the death of a woman in 1928, the matron of the reserve at Condobolin sent the woman's 15-year-old daughter to the Cootamundra home, remarking:

> No mother and a very bad girl. No one to control her, would not keep position. Mother when living and father refused to have her apprenticed.[121]

There is little doubt that responses like this would have given the board a bad name in some Aboriginal communities, but anyone who reads the Ward Registers in their entirety will find that what stands out is their rarity. Indeed, I went looking for examples like those above, but the three here were the worst I could find. Moreover, the handful of overtly prejudiced officials in the Ward Registers were more than matched by those exhibiting the opposite characteristics who went out of their way to provide good services for their charges.

In making this case, I am not arguing that the officials simply acted with 'good intentions'. I accept the argument that people can act with what they thought were good intentions but still have bad consequences for others, and that it is still open to us today to form moral judgements about their behaviour. Good intentions are not good enough. Instead, I am saying that there is sufficient evidence in the Ward Registers to conclude that the Aborigines Protection Board acted, on the whole, to genuinely improve the lives of a great many of the children who came into its care. In some cases, this improvement may not have been great but was nonetheless identifiable. In other cases, it was conspicuous. There is not enough data to quantify this, and the only good evidence remains anecdotal, but it is no less convincing for that. I have already given a number of examples of public officials performing their duty in a positive way, but I will finish this chapter with two more.

The first case comes from correspondence about a 16-year-old girl who was hospitalized in July 1930. Walgett District Hospital wrote to the Aborigines Protection Board requesting payment for the girl's surgery and accommodation for a period of six months. The board asked for more information and the sergeant at Walgett Police Station, Peter Grimes, replied in January 1931:

[121] Ward Registers, file no. 752

I beg to report that the half-caste aboriginal girl B... N... above referred to is 16 years of age and is the daughter of J... N... now employed as a police tracker at Walgett. Her mother died when the girl was very young and she has since been cared for by her grandmother L... N... mother of tracker J... N...

The girl since her birth has been delicate and subject to fits regularly. On the night of 8th July last whilst in a fit she fell into an open fire at her grandmother's camp and was severely burnt on the arms and legs and was taken to the Walgett District Hospital the following day. After being at the hospital for some time it was found necessary to amputate her right arm near the shoulder owing to the injury from burns. She is still an inmate of the hospital takes fits occasionally and it is not known when she can be discharged therefrom. Apart from being delicate she is mentally deranged, and in my opinion would be better away in some home if a suitable place could be found for her.

Her father tracker N... has married again and has a wife and three children to support. He had one son in the Walgett hospital for a number of weeks and died there a few months ago. This lad cost the father a good deal of money and he is not now in a position to pay anything towards the maintenance of his daughter in the hospital. The girl's grandmother and grandfather and other relatives are in very poor circumstances and camped in the Aborigines camp near Walgett. They do not receive assistance from the Board in the way of food or otherwise. The grandfather receives an old age pension of £1 per week, but it is not sufficient to support his wife and three children and the tracker gives them whatever assistance he can.[122]

Anyone reading this will obviously find the daughter's fate distressing, but the story does reveal some positive qualities. Sergeant Grimes sympathized with this family's plight and went out of his way to make a strong case for them. These are not the words of a police officer who, in Read's words, had abandoned his 'common humanity', let alone was 'resorting to force'. His recommendation that the girl be removed to a suitable home was clearly made in both her and her family's interests. It is also noteworthy in light of accusations by historians of widespread discrimination and exclusion of camp Aborigines from schools and hospitals in New South Wales country towns,[123] that the Walgett District Hospital treated the members of this family as generously as any of its white patients, accommodating the son for weeks and the daughter for months. It, too, plainly recognized their common humanity.

Acting on the sergeant's advice, the board arranged for the girl to be admitted to Newington Hospital, Sydney, in February 1931. A month later she was admitted to Rydalmere mental hospital. The few

[122] Histories of Girls and Boys Unattached, bound with pages 'N'
[123] Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, pp 144, 155, 174–5

thereafter by the United Aborigines Mission.[70] Bomaderry was an institution that accommodated orphaned and neglected Aboriginal babies and young children. Some of these children were sent there by the State Children's Relief Board, after magistrate courts had found them to be neglected, and some were sent by the Aborigines Protection Board. From 1912 onwards, although it still received private donations, most of the home's recurrent funding was provided by the board.

The institution at Cootamundra was established by the Aborigines Protection Board in the premises of the former Cootamundra hospital. When the board originally acquired the site in 1910 its proposed institution was designated the 'Home for Orphan and Neglected Children'.[71] However, by the time it was refurbished and opened in 1912 it was called the Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls' Home and had become a live-in institution for training girls before they were sent to jobs as domestic servants.

The Singleton institution was owned by the Aborigines Protection Board from 1918 until December 1923, but in this period its former mission managers and staff were retained to run it. Although its missionary founders used to call it a 'training home', the board described it more realistically as 'practically a home for waifs'.[72] It normally housed 30 children.[73] When the board sold the property in 1923 it used the proceeds to establish a training institution for up to 50 boys at Kinchela, on the lower Macleay River. The Kinchela institution was set up on an existing Aboriginal station and had its own schoolhouse, dormitory and a 35-acre dairy farm, which was used to train boys, before and after school, in tending and milking cattle.

There were other places under the board's control that it sometimes called 'Aboriginal homes', specifically those at Grafton and Runnymede (a cattle station near Casino), both established in the 1890s. But they should not be mistaken for child welfare institutions. They catered for Aborigines of all ages and were not substantially different from the other Aboriginal stations, with a manager, matron,

[70] Retta Dixon, *In the Way of His Steps: A Brief History of Three Decades of History of the Aborigines Inland Mission of Australia 1905–1935*, Aborigines Inland Mission, Sydney, 1936, pp 13, 20; Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1919*, p 2; E. J. Telfer, *Amongst Australian Aborigines, Forty Years of Missionary Work: The Story of the United Aborigines' Mission*, E. J. Telfer, Sydney, 1939, pp 131–44

[71] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1910*, p 4

[72] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1919*, p 2

[73] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1921–22*, p 2

school and residents' village, and accommodating about 70 people.[74] The former mission at Warangesda housed what it grandly called the 'Girls' Training Home' but this was nothing more than a cottage dormitory, which most other stations also provided for single girls of school age and above, in which from 1906 to 1909 the matron provided rudimentary training in cooking and housekeeping. Chapter Five examines in more detail the mythical reputation this institution has gained because of a misrepresentation of the evidence by Peter Read.

As Chapter Two demonstrated, those children who were sent to the board's institutions for children were, for the most part, genuine welfare cases. Where parents or extended families could not give proper care to children, the state had (indeed, still has) a positive duty to intervene and provide the care needed. If authorities had not acted in cases of this kind, they would have been culpable. Of course, whether children are genuinely neglected is always a matter of judgment. Orthodox historians hang their charge of attempted genocide on the assertion that the state was so intent on destroying Aboriginality that it routinely diagnosed neglect when this was not the case. According to Peter Read: 'So deeply entrenched were negative attitudes towards Aboriginality that to the whites separation seemed preferable to almost any divergence from the European nuclear family model.'[75]

It is possible for historians to go through the board's records, especially in the period 1910 to 1920, and find a handful of statements that suggest it would be a good idea for all Aboriginal children living on stations and reserves to be removed to a training institution or to a children's home. In its report for 1920–21, the board complained it could not do all it wanted 'owing to an insufficiency of funds'. It continued:

> The excellent work, however, of keeping the Reserves free of girls and boys above fourteen years of age, and of neglected children, was given special attention, numbers being transferred to the Board's Homes, or to domestic service where circumstances permitted. Indeed, it would be difficult to find any child over school age out of employment, or not an inmate of the Board's Homes.[76]

[74] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1898*, p 2; *Report, 1909*, p 10
[75] Peter Read, 'Introduction' to *The Lost Children: Thirteen Australians Taken From Their Aboriginal Families Tell of the Struggle to Find Their Natural Parents*, Coral Edwards and Peter Read, eds, Doubleday, Sydney, 1989, p xv
[76] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1920–21*, p 1

This last sentence was a considerable overstatement, reflecting more the board's wishes than the reality.[77] Nonetheless, it is important to recognize who was being targeted here. The ideal of placing all Aboriginal youth either in a job or in a training institution (which was what the report meant by 'Board's Homes') was certainly the goal of most board members at the time. But the subjects of this policy ideal were not infants or schoolchildren. The targets were, as the quotation from the annual report said, 'girls and boys above fourteen years of age, and of neglected children'. The next section has more discussion about the board's approach to these groups.

Here, however, one critical point about assessing this, or indeed any social policy, needs to be made. The proof of a policy is always less in its words and more in its actions, especially in the money spent. The tiny proportion of institutional places provided for Aboriginal schoolchildren compared to those at primary school — 125 places in the former, and about 2800 in the latter — is indisputable evidence that the systematic institutionalization of children was neither the authorities' intention nor their practice.

A state that was serious about destroying Aboriginality by stealing children would have established a large number of separate institutions — in 1918, for example, it would have needed 62 the size of Cootamundra and Kinchela for the state's 3119 Aboriginal children — instead of the three it actually funded. Moreover, a state with that intention would have institutionalized the majority of children when they were as young as possible.

Neither of these conditions ever applied. Not only were there few institutional places but, as Chapter Two demonstrated, of that minority of children who were actually separated from their parents, only one-third of them were twelve years or less, hardly any were babies, and almost all these separations could be justified on the same grounds of child welfare that allowed governments to remove white children from abusive, negligent and dysfunctional families. The case for genocide, or of some racist desire to eliminate Aboriginality, simply does not add up.

Nonetheless, there was one policy that the New South Wales government actually did have for the removal of Aboriginal children. The next section is a study of how it operated and the intentions behind it.

[77] The annual report that year showed 1906 of the 2765 Aborigines living on the board's stations and reserves were given rations that year, meaning they were unemployed. It is highly probable that a number of them were aged fourteen to nineteen years.

THE 'BOARDING OUT' SYSTEM FOR ABORIGINAL APPRENTICES

> [B]y 1900 the parameters were set. The Board reasoned that if the Aboriginal population, characterized in some quarters as a 'wild race of half-castes', was growing, then it would somehow have to be diminished. If the children were to be *de*socialized as Aborigines and *re*socialised as whites, they would have to be removed from their parents ... Child removal, or to put it politically, the separation of the teaching generation from the learning generation, was seized upon as one administrative tool of a policy of dispersal, for it was much easier to whisk the children away into inaccessible places than to disperse a camp of a hundred adults who had nowhere to go. By 1910 it was politically less important that Aboriginal children become carpenters or maids. The vital purpose to the New South Wales administration was that, whatever else the children grew up to be, they should not be allowed to grow up as identifying Aborigines.
>
> — Peter Read, *The Lost Children*, 1989[78]

The only genuine policy the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Board had for separating children from their families was largely directed at those aged fourteen and over who had completed school. The policy was that these young people should be apprenticed out to employers for up to four years, during which time they 'boarded out', that is, they lived away from home, on their employers' premises. Once their apprenticeship was complete they were free citizens. The board wanted them to acquire job skills so that, instead of spending their adult lives on reserves, existing on handouts, they could make a living in mainstream society.

The existence of the apprenticeship system is immediately apparent to anyone who reads the primary sources but, in their writings for the public, most recent historians have either played down its role or avoided it altogether. Yet, apart from a minority of Aboriginal orphans, neglected children and others who were institutionalized for the same welfare reasons as their white counterparts, the boarding out system of apprenticeship was the only government program that purposely detached Aboriginal youth from their families. Hence it is this program that bears the weight of the accusation that Aboriginal children in New South Wales were systematically stolen.

The boarding out system of apprenticeship was applied in most cases to Aboriginal youth who were orphaned, neglected or suffered some other perceptible social disadvantage. As Chapter Two demonstrated, welfare reasons of this kind were behind 55 per cent of the decisions made by the Aborigines Protection Board to send young people to apprenticeships. Most of the other 45 per cent, however,

[78] Read, 'Introduction' to Edwards and Read, eds, *The Lost Children*, pp xii–xiii

were apprenticed primarily because an opening with an employer became available rather than because of some more pressing welfare problem. In the long run, most of those sent to institutions were intended for apprenticeship as well. They were to be trained at the Cootamundra and Kinchela institutions and then sent on to employers. Of the 800 children in the Ward Registers, the records show that 691 eventually gained employment, mostly as apprentices (although the real total was probably higher since a number of records were incomplete).

The boys were generally apprenticed to farmers and pastoralists to learn agricultural skills, and the girls were apprenticed as domestic servants to white households. In our own time, these categories of employment probably seem menial and the choice of them calculated to consign Aborigines to the very lowest rungs of the employment ladder. Peter Read denounces these choices as racially prejudiced:

> In choosing a position, the Board assumed that blacks were stupid. Its very first report in 1883 stated that black children after training 'would take their places with the industrial classes of the colony'.[79]

To Read — who grew up in Sydney's wealthy upper north shore and went to an exclusive private school there in the 1950s — being consigned to the industrial classes might seem a fate worse than death. But in the early twentieth century this was where the majority of Australians were employed. The board was not asking Aborigines to take occupations any more onerous or demeaning than those of hundreds of thousands of their white countrymen. Read's accusation that these jobs were fit only for the 'stupid' is a telling comment about his own grasp of this period and his patronizing attitude to its people, both white and black.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, agriculture for males and domestic service for females were Australia's two biggest single employment categories for each sex. At the 1911 Commonwealth census, the major occupational categories were: primary production 536,000 workers; industrial 429,000; commercial 224,000; domestic 202,000; transport and communication 123,000; professional 112,000. For women, the major employment classifications in 1911 were: domestic 145,279 workers; industrial 106,952; professional 48,970; commercial 44,499.[80]

[79] Read, *Rape of the Soul*, p 59

[80] Major occupational categories calculated from 1911 census by Ian Turner, *Industrial Labour and Politics: The Dynamics of the Labour Movement in Eastern Australia, 1900–1921*, Australian National University, Canberra, 1965, Appendix I, p 249; Calculations for women from 1911 census by Beverley

In choosing these occupations, the Aborigines Protection Board was acting responsibly. It was directing its charges to the areas of greatest labour demand, thus giving them their best chance of finding a job. It was also directing them to a form of employment which Aboriginal women found congenial. In rural areas, the most common form of employment for Aboriginal women had long been in domestic service. In one passage about her life on a Northern Territory cattle station in the early twentieth century, Mrs Aeneas Gunn told how Aboriginal women wanted this kind of work: 'So many lubras put themselves on the homestead staff to fill the place left by Nellie, that the one room was filled to overflowing while the work was being done.'[81] Even Henry Reynolds has agreed that Aboriginal women and girls sought out work as domestic servants on rural properties.[82] Moreover, the same policy operated for white children. The expansion of public schools in New South Wales after 1900 was based on a policy of 'preparing each child for the industrial role best suited for him'.[83] In principle, the training of both white and black children was subject to the same policy objective.

The program of apprenticeships for Aboriginal youth was neither ambiguous nor complex and there are no good reasons for historians to have mistaken its objectives. Although the policy evolved over time, its intentions were clearly expressed by its originators and those who implemented it from the 1880s to the 1960s. The board's annual reports over this period left little doubt about its objectives or the ages of those it targeted. What follows is a short history of the board's apprenticeship policy that documents its intentions.

The apprenticeship policy was present at the very outset of the establishment the Aborigines Protection Board. Indeed, it began in 1882 when two public figures who were to be appointed to the proposed board the following year, Inspector-General Edmund Fosbery and Phillip Gidley King, went to the south-west of the state to investigate the two existing Aboriginal missions at Warangesda and Maloga. The missions had been established, respectively, by the Reverend John Gribble and Daniel Matthews and were funded by the private body, the Aborigines Protection Association. Their visits

Kingston, *My Wife, My Daughter and Poor Mary Ann: Women and Work in Australia*, Nelson, Melbourne, 1975, p 49

[81] Mrs Aeneas Gunn, *We of the Never-Never*, (1908), Hutchinson, Melbourne, 1981, p 54

[82] Henry Reynolds, *Black Pioneers: How Aboriginal and Islander People Helped Build Australia*, Penguin, Ringwood, 2000, pp 77–83

[83] A. G. Austin and R. J. W. Selleck, *The Australian Government School, 1830–1914: Select Documents with Commentary*, Pitman, Melbourne, 1975, p 199

left Fosbery and King unimpressed with both the standard of living provided and the long-term objectives pursued by the missions. Both institutions had poor quality buildings and facilities. Their sources of funding were inadequate and declining. The majority of the population present during the inspections were children and youths. Apart from attempting to convert them to Christianity and providing very basic standards in literacy, the missionaries had no plans to prepare their young charges for employment in the mainstream economy. The report Fosbery and King wrote was scathing of the management skills of the two missionaries and of their desire to retain Aboriginal children in their closed communities.

> We endeavoured to elicit from Mr Gribble and Mr Matthews what might be the ulterior benefit they were devoting themselves to achieve on behalf of the children; but beyond the prospective result of their present moral training and education, neither of these gentlemen was able to explain his views satisfactorily to us as to any future advantages to be derived by the children by retaining them in an aboriginal asylum. We fail to see any. On the contrary, we think they should be so further trained as to fit them to take their places as domestic servants, or amongst the industrial classes; and this, we conceive, would be best attained by 'boarding out' the young of both sexes, chiefly the half-castes, but including even those also of full aboriginal blood, when practicable.[84]

Their report did not abandon the idea of creating Aboriginal villages on the reserves. But it wanted these places to be confined to the delivery of welfare services for the dependent, that is, for 'the infirm and such women and children as cannot be provided for by husbands or fathers'. The men and boys over twelve years of age should be able to maintain themselves either by working on the station itself or on neighbouring homesteads, especially by shearing, which paid well enough during the season to keep themselves and their families for the rest of the year. The report wanted the government to take over the missions and to fund similar Aboriginal communities in order to give handouts to the needy and to train the men in bush carpentry, gardening, farming, cutting firewood, and marketing their produce. The authors recognized the Aborigines' attachment to their own districts but wanted the young to be withdrawn from the existing communities and vocationally trained. Their long-term objective was for them to be employed in, and merged into, the mainstream population.

[84] *Aboriginal Mission Stations at Warangesda and Maloga: Report and Correspondence respecting Inquiry into and Working of.* P. G. King and E. Fosbery to the Colonial Secretary, 8 August, 1882, New South Wales Legislative Council, 1883, p 3, in *Votes and Proceedings of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly*, 1883

> It is only reasonable that the aborigines should be able to remain on their native soil and in their tribal districts in due security and comfort; but it appears to be equally reasonable and important that the younger half-castes should be withdrawn from their midst and gradually absorbed into the general community, young quadroon and half-caste children who are without parents being first removed, with a view to being placed in an institution or boarded out. Subsequently, other children might be withdrawn with the consent of their parents, and others of useful ages may be selected from time to time by persons who, after due inquiry, may be found eligible and willing to avail themselves of their services — the girls for domestic work, and the lads for farm or station employment. Regard will, doubtless, be paid to the feelings of the parents or other adults interested in the children's welfare.[85]

Their use of the term 'children' here needs to be kept in context. The authors were discussing Aborigines who were past school age and who were eligible for the workforce. When the Aborigines Protection Board's powers to send children for training were finally enacted in legislation in 1909, the act defined 'children' as follows: 'for such purposes a person shall be deemed a child who is above fourteen and under twenty-one years of age.'[86] Today, we would call them 'teenagers', 'youth' or 'young people'.

For the next twenty years, the policy of apprenticing out Aboriginal youth was still advocated by the board but not a great deal was actually done about it. The board eventually took over the Warangesda and Maloga missions in 1894, together with a third mission the Aborigines Protection Association had founded on the reserve at Brewarrina. The board converted all three into state-managed, state-funded Aboriginal stations. By 1900, the number of stations had increased to seven: Brewarrina, Brungle, Cumeroogunga (formerly Maloga), Grafton, Runnymede, Warangesda and Wallaga Lake. The managers of these stations sometimes reported success in placing a small number of young people into apprenticeships. For example: at Brewarrina in 1897: 'six boys and five girls are apprenticed out from this settlement to district residents, and, generally speaking, give satisfaction'; at Warangesda in 1898: 'the manager of the Warangesda Station has reported that he has sent several half-caste girls to service, and that they were giving satisfaction.'; at Wallaga Lake in 1900: 'two girls were apprenticed and are giving satisfaction'.[87]

In 1901, the board's report observed that girls on some stations had been successfully taught dressmaking and cooking and, as a result, had been apprenticed out. However, it noted that arranging training and

[85] *Aboriginal Mission Stations at Warangesda and Maloga*, p 4
[86] Clause 12 (2), Aborigines Protection Act, 1909
[87] Aborigines Protection Board, *Reports*, 1897 p 3; 1898 p 3; 1900 p 4

employment for boys was more difficult because their labour was only in demand at certain seasons of the year. It wanted to expand their skills by teaching them rough carpentering, blacksmithing and tailoring, but lacked both the funds and training facilities to do it.[88] Another problem with boys was that some absconded from employers and made their way back to their communities, while others wanted to be apprenticed not to farms in the country but to mechanical trades in the city, which the board decided 'was not deemed desirable'.[89]

Young males were also less inclined to accept apprenticeships, which bound them legally to employers for four years and for which they received not full wages but only pocket money. For those apprenticed from some Aboriginal stations at this time, employers paid the sum of their wages into a trust fund of the board. The apprentices themselves received only a small sum each week — the 'lousy little sixpence' of a film title on the subject. The board kept the rest in its trust account and saved it 'for their use later in life'.[90] The board did not trust the apprentices to spend their wages wisely when they were young. It usually paid them their accrued lump sum when they came of age or got married. However, this was a constant source of grievance and was one reason why some parents obstructed board efforts to entice young people into apprenticeships.

> Unfortunately, the parents of the youths and girls apprenticed from other stations show a disinclination to any portion of their children's wages being thus saved for them, and it is to be regretted that the Board have no authority to compel them to do so, though it would be to the future advantage of their offspring.[91]

Despite this difficulty, the proposal that Aboriginal youth be boarded out as apprentices remained a live issue. It surfaced in various forms in the 1890s and 1900s as support grew within the administration for greater authority over its charges. There were two overriding issues that pressed upon the board and its managers. The first was their desire for their charges to get jobs in the mainstream workforce. The other was their dismay at leaving young adolescents to grow up

[88] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1901*, p 3

[89] Aborigines Protection Board, Report, *Report, 1904*, pp 3, 6

[90] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1904*, p 2; In 1936, the pocket money was increased to a sliding scale of between one shilling for first-year apprentices and 2s 6d a week for those in their fourth year: Regulations in accordance with the Aborigines Protection Act, Exhibit G of *Proceedings of the Select Committee on Administration of the Aborigines Protection Board*, Government Printer, Sydney, 13 July 1938, pp 129–30

[91] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1904*, p 2

amidst the dissipation that prevailed on a number of the reserves and camps on the fringes of white settlements. In his 1897 report, for instance, the manager of the Brungle Aboriginal station near Gundagai wrote:

> Ex School Children — I desire again to draw the attention of the board to the necessity for finding employment for the boys and girls as they leave school. Could not the State Children's Act be made to apply to enable them to be apprenticed? It is useless to find places for them unless they are bound to their employers, as they will either desert or others will entice them away.
>
> If left in the camp their education will only assist to make them rather worse than the present generation, whose laziness, vice and immorality cannot be comprehended by anyone who is not brought constantly into contact with them.[92]

By 1906, the board's annual reports had reported plenty of individual successes in apprenticeship but it remained disappointed by the overall low uptake. That year it reported: 'As usual, a number of aboriginal youths and girls had been sent out to various private homes as apprentices and servants.' But it began to demand more authority to impose this system of training:

> In view of the evident advantage to them of being well trained (the girls in household duties and the boys in farming and other pursuits), it is to be regretted that the number at service is comparatively small. This can only be remedied by giving the Board powers *in loco parentis* by legislation, and in perfecting preliminary industrial training given on the Board's stations, so that the services of youths of both sexes will be more sought after by employers.[93]

In 1907, the girls' dormitories at Brewarrina and Cumeroogunga stations were used for lessons in cooking, sewing, laundry and other domestic work. At Warangesda station, the dormitory had been designated the Girls' Training Home and ten of the girls aged seven to fourteen were given a standard school curriculum plus classes in domestic skills by the matron, in this case under threat of having their rations stopped if they failed to attend.[94] But that year, the board's annual report indicated it had begun preparations for a more ambitious program.

> One of the most important questions the Board have to face is that of a large number of half-caste and other children (some of whom are almost white) at the various stations and camps. Under present conditions, though much has been done for some of them as regards primary educa-

[92] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1897*, p 13
[93] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1906*, p 5
[94] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1907*, p 13

> tion, and also (on the Board's stations) training the girls for domestic duties, they are, to a large extent, growing up in idleness, and under the influence of ill-regulated parents. An attempt will be made to solve what is undoubtedly a difficult problem. Returns are being obtained from the various superintendents of police throughout the State, furnishing full information regarding the children at the stations and camps, up to the age of 18 years, and the Board will endeavour, without unduly interfering with parental control, to evolve some scheme for training these children to proper spheres of usefulness, instead of allowing them to become an encumbrance on the State.[95]

This was the precursor to a surge of activity that over the next few years eventually established the legislative and institutional framework within which policy for Aboriginal youth operated until 1940. The legislation included the passing of the Aborigines Protection Act in 1909, followed by an amendment to the act in 1915 and a further amendment in 1918. The institutions were the four homes at Singleton, Bomaderry, Cootamundra and Kinchela.

The orthodox historians in this field have usually credited these developments to the energy and determination of Robert Donaldson, a former railway construction manager who was a member of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly from 1898 to 1913. Donaldson joined the Aborigines Protection Board in December 1904 and remained on it until 1915 when he was appointed its first inspector of Aborigines. He held that position until he retired in 1929. Heather Goodall portrays him as a racial zealot with an unhealthy interest in controlling the lives of adolescent girls:

> Donaldson's report shows a man repelled by Aboriginal social and cultural life, which he described as 'the evil influences of camp surroundings'. He took up the goal of gaining power over Aboriginal adolescent girls as a crusade, offering all his assistance in this 'urgent matter, and one we should not shrink from'.[96]

Goodall says Donaldson was responsible for conducting and interpreting the survey of stations and reserves mentioned in the 1907 annual report. The data he compiled, she says, showed half-castes were not leaving the camps and gaining employment in the pastoral and agricultural economy. Instead, they still identified as Aborigines and remained within Aboriginal communities, swelling their numbers. Hence, an increasing number of half-caste Aboriginal children and adolescents, especially girls, were still in the camps and 'not under parent control'. His report shocked the board, Goodall says, and led it to lobby for greater legislative power to remove children from their

[95] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1907*, p 4
[96] Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, p 121

parents and to send them to institutions and apprenticeships.'[97] This campaign was responsible for the 1909 Aborigines Protection Act.

Donaldson also gets a bad press in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. The author of his entry, Philip Felton, accused him of responsibility for implementing the program to remove children from their families for training and apprenticeship. Felton also said Donaldson was a racist who publicly denigrated Chinese, Indians and Aborigines. As board inspector with absolute power to inspect homes and remove children, Felton wrote, 'he was feared and hated by two generations of Aboriginals throughout New South Wales'.[98] The Link-Up submission to the Human Rights Commission inquiry agreed: 'in the 1980s, Donaldson was widely remembered by Aboriginal elders and hated for his determination to take Aboriginal children away from their parents.'[99] Bain Attwood approvingly quotes Peter Read's assessment that Donaldson was 'the most bitterly hated man in the history of the state'.[100]

All of this exaggerates Donaldson's role and his malice towards Aborigines. As recorded above, the notion of 'boarding out' Aboriginal apprentices was first mooted in 1882 and so preceded Donaldson's entry into Aboriginal administration by more than two decades. Other board members and station managers, especially the long-serving vice-chairman George Ardill, had long drawn the same conclusions about what needed to be done. Historian Heather Radi has argued, more convincingly, that Ardill, a social worker and long-time social welfare activist who was on the board from 1897 to 1916, was its 'most active member' and its 'effective policy maker'.[101] Ardill was also involved in white welfare organizations for unmarried moth-

[97] Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, p 120

[98] Philip Felton, 'Robert Thomas Donaldson (1851–1936)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol 8, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1981, p 319. Felton's principal source for his entry was a history of Aboriginal political activism, *Vote Ferguson for Aboriginal Freedom* (1974), written by Jack Horner, himself an Aboriginal political activist. As a former public servant in Aboriginal affairs, Felton might have been expected to do a little more research into the board's surviving records.

[99] Link-Up (NSW) and Tikka Jan Wilson, *In The Best Interests of the Child? Stolen Children: Aboriginal Pain/White Shame*, Aboriginal History Monograph 4, Canberra, 1997, p 57

[100] Bain Attwood, Winifred Burrage, Alan Burrage and Elsie Stokie, *A Life Together, A Life Apart: A History of Relations Between Europeans and Aborigines*, Melbourne University Press, 1994, p 18; Peter Read, *A Hundred Years War: The Wiradjuri People and the State*, Australian National University Press, Sydney, 1988, p 64

[101] Heather Radi, 'George Edward Ardill (1857–1945)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol 7, 1979, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, pp 90–2

ers, prostitutes, ex-prisoners and neglected white children.[102] He had joined the Aborigines Protection Board from his former position as secretary of the Aborigines Protection Association. Radi says that both the 1909 Act and the 1915 amendment were 'largely due to his efforts'.

Unfortunately, every melodrama needs an obvious villain and, in their story of the Stolen Generations in New South Wales, recent historians have cast Donaldson in the role. It is true that the board gave a vote of thanks in 1909 for Donaldson's 'untiring acts in getting the Aborigines Bill passed into law'.[103] But that was nothing remarkable. It also congratulated the Chief Secretary W. H. Wood for getting the bill on the statute book, and passed a special resolution for the valuable services of the then chairman of the board, Inspector-General Thomas Garvin, and its secretary, Arthur Pettit, in the preparation of the Act and its regulations.[104]

The last thing anyone should do is take the word of the current generation of historians as definitive about Donaldson's character. So far, no one has shown why he gave up his career as construction manager and parliamentarian, positions that gave him far more status and remuneration than he ever earned as an inspector of Aborigines. Goodall's claim that he was on some kind of crusade to gain power over adolescent girls is a rhetorical smear, unsupported by any evidence. Instead, Donaldson should be put in the category of that small but dedicated minority of white Australians who devoted a good part of their lives to improving the position of the Aborigines by encouraging them, by methods that in his case were both coercive and persuasive, to enter the modern world.

In the event, the 1909 Act delivered part but not all that the board wanted. It extended the existing prohibition on the sale and supply of alcohol to full-blood Aborigines, to those of part descent who lived on an Aboriginal reserve or who received the board's rations. It provided penalties for trespassing, drunkenness and indecent behaviour on the board's stations and reserves. It prohibited people of part-Aboriginal descent from living on stations and reserves unless they had permission. It required every Aboriginal child under fourteen years of age, if ordered by the board or its officers, to attend the nearest public school. It prescribed the administration, living conditions, wages and pocket money of Aboriginal apprentices between fourteen and 21 years old. However, the government did not give the

[102] Brian Dickey, *No Charity There: A Short History of Social Welfare in Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1987, pp 82–3

[103] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1909*, p 2

[104] Aborigines Protection Board, *1909*, p 2; *Report, 1910*, p 3

board the *in loco parentis* powers it sought over apprentices. No authority for this was written into the original bill. During the parliamentary debate Donaldson moved an amendment to give the board 'power to assume full control and custody of the child of any aborigine if such course shall be deemed by the board to be in the interest of such child'. However, the amendment was defeated when put to a vote.[105] The Act permitted the board to place into apprenticeship an Aboriginal child over fourteen years of age under the terms of the Apprentices Act of 1901, but only with the consent of the child and its parents or guardians. 'Unfortunately,' said the 1910 annual report, 'the Board's powers in this direction are not so wide as they might be.'[106]

APPRENTICESHIP AND THE GOAL OF CLOSING THE RESERVES

The board found this lack of authority especially frustrating because its recent state-wide survey had found more white households and rural properties willing to employ Aboriginal apprentices than there were Aborigines available to take these positions: 'the supply of suitable apprentices is not equal to the demand'. The board saw this not simply as a labour market issue. It lamented that Aboriginal parents were not more ambitious for their children to become employable.

> The Board do not desire to unduly interfere in the relationship between parent and child, and when parents have shown themselves willing to find places of employment for their children, they have been allowed to do so. It is hard to make these people understand that the Board's one aim is to make the lot of the children better than that of their parents; but it is clear that unless the half-caste and quadroon population is to become a burden on the State, they must be made to recognize that all those who are able to do so must leave the reserves and earn their own livelihood.[107]

When Peter Read and Heather Goodall have discussed this issue they have never put the problem in the way it was actually seen by the board. Instead, they have cherry-picked single sentences and phrases to make it appear that the board wanted to remove Aboriginal children permanently from Aboriginal communities in order to end the Aboriginal race. As the Link-Up organisation put it in a report largely written by Read:

> The connection between a genocidal vision of the ultimate 'dying out' of the Aboriginal race and the amendment is quite explicit in Fosbery's

[105] Aborigines Protection Bill, *New South Wales Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly, 16 December 1909, pp 4552–3
[106] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1910*, p 4
[107] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1910*, p 4

> speech. These lawmakers aimed towards a vision of the future when 'there will be no occasion for these camps or reserves', because there would be no Aboriginal population as a culturally distinct group.[108]

In reality, however, the board's main concern was that, unless they were trained for the workforce, young Aborigines would grow into adults who would spend their lives unemployed, living on reserves and dependent on government rations. It is true that part of the board's concern was the cost of maintaining thousands of welfare dependents who would become 'a burden on the state', but it is equally true that it saw employment as the only way for Aborigines to get off welfare and live independent lives in the modern world. It wanted to put an end not to the Aboriginal race but to Aboriginal dependency.

The board's stations had originally been established only to support to 'the infirm and such women and children as cannot be provided for by husbands or fathers'. Men and boys were always expected to work, unless their district was in an economic slump. The reserves had originally been set aside either as farms for Aboriginal selectors or as short-term camps for itinerant, seasonal workers. Rations were intended only for those inhabitants who were ill or unemployed. Once they had left school, the board thought, young Aborigines should be discouraged from remaining at these places. Over the years it saw several of the reserves it had created degenerate into squalid, unsanitary, near-permanent settlements, riven by alcoholism, violence and sexual abuse, and places unfit for children to grow up in. The board's solution was training and apprenticeship. One report in 1908 from the reserve at Ulgundahi Island on the Clarence River described its goals by quoting the district school inspector.

> In this school, so far as is possible with the limited appliances and accommodation, the girls are being trained as domestic servants. Surely (says Mr Inspector Henderson) we may reasonably expect this will assist the girls to maintain their sense of self-respect and, later on, fit them to earn their own living rather than become objects of charity during the years of their vigorous womanhood.[109]

It is certainly true that in the period 1908 to 1915 the board hoped it could eventually close down most of the reserves and stations. It wanted most young Aboriginal people to get normal jobs like other Australians. If this occurred, board members thought, these welfare depots would become redundant and would no longer exist. It is also true that in its reports of 1910 and 1911, the board expressed the hope that those youths who left the reserves for apprenticeship or

[108] Link-Up, *In The Best Interests of the Child?*, p 62
[109] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1909*, p 3

employment would never go back. The 1910 report stated: 'The Board recognize that the only chance these children have is to be taken away from their present environment and properly trained by earnest workers before being apprenticed out, and after once having left the aborigines' reserves they should never be allowed to return to them permanently.'[110] In context, this sentence is not as sweeping as it might otherwise appear. It came under the sub-heading 'Proposed Home for Orphan and Neglected Children' and was part of a discussion of the board's acquisition of the former hospital at Cootamundra. By 'these children' it did not mean all Aboriginal children but those who were orphans or neglected.

Peter Read has also found an address given by Robert Donaldson to the Australasian Catholic Congress in 1909 where he said: 'Under no circumstances whatever should the boys and girls be allowed to return to the camps, except on a short visit in an emergency, and then only by consent of the department.' It is clear that a majority of board members around this time thought the camps and reserves were highly undesirable places for young adolescents, especially girls — for reasons I will elaborate in more detail in Chapter Four — and if they could remove them for training or employment they should do so.

Despite its low opinion of them, the board did not seek to close down the reserves overnight or abruptly break up the communities that were already established there. I will quote at length one paragraph from the 1911 report, which showed how the board, at the height of its determination to take strong action on this issue, struggled to devise a policy that would provide Aboriginal adolescents with the skills and ethos required for regular employment, while weaning them off the debilitating, dependent culture that had grown up on the reserves. Several of the phrases from this paragraph — 'to allow these children to grow up in more or less vicious surroundings', 'a positive menace to the state', 'once away from the Reserves not allow them to return', 'removed at as early an age as possible' — have now become infamous within the orthodox literature that accuses the board of wanting to destroy Aboriginality. But these phrases are usually selected out of context, while the full text reveals a different perspective.

> It must be admitted that the problem offers many difficulties. The day is long past when it was possible to segregate the aborigines. So far as the full-bloods are concerned, the Board have done much with the limited funds at their disposal, to make their lot as easy as possible by providing suitable dwellings and supplying them with rations, clothing and blankets, and it is not proposed to interfere with them; but by far the greater num-

[110] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1910*, p 4

> ber of those the Board have to deal with are half-castes, and others with a lesser degree of aboriginal blood. With regard to the adults, it would be obviously harsh to turn a number of those who have families dependent upon them, and who have for years been taught to look upon themselves as aborigines, away from the Reserves. On the other hand, unless some prompt measures are taken, the children who are now growing up, will, in a few years, be in the same position as their parents. Of these children, a number who are half-castes, quadroons, and octoroons, are increasing with alarming rapidity. To allow these children to remain on the Reserves to grow up in comparative idleness, and in the midst of more or less vicious surroundings, would be, to say the least, an injustice to the children themselves, and a positive menace to the State. The only solution of the problem, therefore, is to deal effectively with the children, and while not unduly interfering with the relationship between parent and child, to see that they are properly trained to spheres of future usefulness, and once away from the Reserves not to allow them to return — except, perhaps, in the case of those who have parents, on an occasional visit. Past experience shows that the children cannot be properly trained under their present environments, and it is essential that they should be removed at as early an age as possible to ensure success.[111]

In this passage, the board cannot be accused of a ruthless and insensitive program of forced assimilation. It was not attempting to assimilate full-blood Aborigines at all, and it recognized that a great many half-castes on the reserves identified as Aborigines in a way that was neither possible nor desirable to change. It presumed Aboriginal people had the same bonds of affection between parent and child as everyone else. Yet it felt that, given the conditions prevailing on the reserves, it would be an injustice to leave the young people who lived on them to their own devices. And if it did nothing, the handout culture on the reserves would be self-perpetuating. This is an age-old dilemma. Governments still confront it in their search for a solution to the alcoholism, unemployment and despair that envelops most of the remote Aboriginal communities today.

By focusing on only one aspect of the issue, the policy of removal, academic historians and political commentators have failed their professional duty to see the issues in the dimensions that confronted the authorities at the time. For instance, in Robert Manne's 2001 essay, *In Denial: The Stolen Generations and the Right*, a critique of conservative authors who rejected the Stolen Generations thesis, the author quoted the above passage from the Aborigines Protection Board's 1911 Annual Report almost in full, without recognizing the genuine dilemma that confronted the authorities.[112] Whatever action

[111] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1911*, p 2

[112] Robert Manne, *In Denial: The Stolen Generations and the Right*, The Australian Quarterly Essay, 1, Schwartz Publishing, Melbourne, 2001

they took, or if they took no action at all, there would be harmful consequences. Manne failed to acknowledge the truth of the report's statement that to leave children 'in the midst of more or less vicious surroundings' would be 'an injustice to the children themselves'. Yet at the time he wrote, the truly horrific degrees of violence and sexual abuse then rampant on the remote Aboriginal welfare settlements in northern Australia were well-known to virtually everyone who seriously investigated the subject.[113] Instead of addressing the consequences of the perpetuation of Aboriginal welfare policies, Manne's polemic was primarily concerned with denouncing anyone who dared to disagree with him.

Even though the 1909 Act did not permit what it wanted, the board did not give up. It continued to press for more authority over apprenticeship and employment. All its annual reports from 1910 to 1914 raised the issue. Board members also made personal representations to the government and at one stage in 1912 they used the daily press to promote their case. They invited reporters to sit in on a deputation by the chairman Inspector-General Ernest Day, vice-chairman George Ardill, and board members Robert Donaldson and Robert Scobie, to the New South Wales Chief Secretary, Fred Flowers. The *Daily Telegraph* reported that they put their case with force and got a good reception. It quoted Flowers agreeing:

> The question of prejudice because of their colour should not apply to the aborigines of this state. If they were trained to go into white society, they had a right to go into that society. If they were capable of following occupations or keeping a farm they ought to be permitted to do so.[114]

In 1913 the board drafted a bill to amend the 1909 Act 'with a view to vesting sufficient powers in the Board to enable them to effectively deal with the aboriginal children by placing them in training homes and apprenticing them to suitable employers'.[115] Flowers, one of the key figures in the formation of the Labor Party in New South Wales,[116] introduced the bill to the parliament in November

[113] For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence, *The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence Report*, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Development, Brisbane, 2000

[114] 'The Aborigines Camps: Why the Children Should Be Removed', *Daily Telegraph*, 14 May 1912, p 6; 'Blacks' Camps: More Supervision Wanted', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 May 1912

[115] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1913*, p 3

[116] Bede Nairn, 'Fred Flowers (1864–1928)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol 8, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1981, pp 528–30

1914 and, supported by his Labor colleagues who then formed the government, it passed in January 1915.[117]

The Aborigines Protection Amending Act, 1915, gave the board the powers of *in loco parentis* that it had long sought. It thereby gained control over every Aboriginal child whose moral or physical welfare was, in its opinion, imperilled. There was still a right of appeal for parents under the Neglected Children and Juvenile Offenders Act. However, the onus of proof was now reversed. Under its 1909 Act, the board could only remove those children it could prove in court were neglected. Under the 1915 amendment, the board could now remove any child it considered neglected, and it was up to the parents to prove in court that this was not so. In practice, however, appeals against board decisions were beyond the abilities of most Aboriginal parents. In addition, apprenticeship by the board was no longer subject to the Apprentices Act, 1901. The board could apprentice youth 'on such terms and conditions as it may think under the circumstances of the case to be desirable'.

In February 1918, the state government passed more legislation extending the board's authority. The Aborigines Protection (Amendment) Act, 1918, defined the meaning of the word 'Aborigine' to encompass both full-blood and half-caste Aborigines. Part of the board's reason for lobbying for this was that it wanted the right to exclude from its reserves people of less than half-caste descent. The board also gained the authority to deal with Aborigines whether or not they were receiving rations and accommodation from the board.[118] Legally, this extended board power from within its stations and reserves to Aborigines across the whole of the state, but the board and its budget were fully occupied in managing the existing stations and reserves and there is no evidence that this additional power was ever used.

The most visible changes came from the 1915 amendment. Following this, the board decided to appoint its own inspectors to visit reserves and stations to ensure their managers were conducting them properly, that standards of housing, water supply and sanitation were adequate, and that claims for expenditure were genuine. Until 1915, these tasks had been the responsibility in each district of a voluntary committee of up to seven prominent local citizens. A total of 27 of these committees functioned throughout the state at the time.[119] But

[117] *New South Wales Parliamentary Debates*, 24 November 1914, pp 1353–6; 27 January 1925, pp 1951–68. This was the first Labor government in New South Wales, headed by James McGowen from 1910 to 1913 and by William Arthur Holman from 1913 to 1916.

[118] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1918*, p 2

[119] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1914*, pp 15–16

while in some regions these committees met regularly and inspected stations conscientiously, in other places it was difficult to even get a quorum let alone regular inspections and reports. The board used the opportunity of the amended Act to abolish many local boards and centralize its administration by employing two inspectors, Robert Donaldson and H. L. Swindlehurst, to visit stations and reserves instead. These two inspectors also gained the authority to nominate children to be sent out to apprenticeship or to the homes at Cootamundra or Singleton, and later Kinchela. Station managers were given the same power.

According to Peter Read, the administrative changes that followed the 1915 amendment effectively ended any previous restraint about removing children.

> This gave officials the power to remove any child under any pretext, for not even a court hearing was necessary. From that time the Board's officers were at work removing hundreds of children — 1500 by 1934 — from the camps to which they were never to return.[120]

Read wanted his readers to think the board's officers were a law unto themselves and seized children at whim. This was not so. The board insisted that before they could act, its inspectors, station managers and the police had to either have the permission of the parents concerned or apply to the board and give the reasons for their recommendation for removal. In May 1919 it resolved:

> In the event of it being considered necessary to remove Aboriginal children from the precincts of an Aboriginal station the consent of the parents be regarded as a precedent, failing that the approval of the Board must be obtained.[121]

The board's minutes show that it did not simply rubber stamp the recommendations subsequently sent by its officers and the police. It often ordered removals be delayed, or sought further information, or denied applications outright. For instance, in 1914 the local police advised that three girls at Moonahcullah station should be sent to Cootamundra Home. The board initially gave approval but then delayed any action, calling for a further report to be made. The girls remained where they were. The actual removal of the girls from this station did not take place until 1917 and 1920.[122] If police and station managers thought children should be removed, they had to make a strong case.

[120] Read, 'Introduction' to Edwards and Read, eds, *The Lost Children*, p xiv
[121] Aborigines Protection Board, Minutes of meeting, 14 May 1919
[122] Aborigines Protection Board, Minutes of meeting of 26 October 1911, 26 February 1914, 7 May 1914, 4 June 1919

Other historians have dramatized the consternation the board's plans caused within Aboriginal communities. They have especially focused on events at Cumeroogunga between 1912 and 1919. Drawing on oral history told to Diane Barwick by some former members of that community 50 years later, Charles Rowley described their 'abiding distaste' at the board's attempt 'to take our children away from their own people and try to make them "pass" and turn against us'.[123] Heather Goodall has described wild scenes during attempts by board officials and local police to forcibly remove children from their distraught mothers:

> Cumeragunja Kooris remember the removals and the escapes, with children running into the bush and mothers swimming the Murray clutching their children, and they remember the physical confrontations with the Board's officers as they tried to leave with the children they had managed to 'collect'.[124]

In reality, however, those targeted by the board were not infants small enough for their mothers to clutch. Most were youths aged thirteen, fourteen and fifteen years, who were quite capable of swimming the Murray River on their own.[125] Moreover, permanent removal in order to turn children against their own people was well beyond the board's powers. The 1915 amendment was principally directed at compelling Aboriginal teenagers into apprenticeships. The board only retained its authority over these youths while they remained apprenticed. Once the apprentices had served their four years, which occurred when most turned eighteen, they were free to do what they liked, as Peter Read himself has admitted.[126] They could go back to the stations or reserves they came from, if they wanted to. Indeed, their individual files often record that the board gave them the train fare home. Chapter Two established that at least half, and probably many more, did go back to their families and communities. The only children who could not go home were those

[123] Charles Rowley, *Outcasts in White Australia: Aboriginal Policy and Practice, Volume II*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1971, p 169. His source was Diane Barwick's unpublished thesis, A Little More Than Kin: Regional Affinity and Group Identity Among Aboriginal Migrants in Melbourne, PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1963.

[124] Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, p 127

[125] Merle Jackomos remembered her childhood at Cumeroongunga in the 1930s: 'There were good times playing along the river Murray. We were all good swimmers and during the summer months, apart from attending school, we swam and swam all day.' 'Cummeroogunja', in Bill Gammage and Peter Spearritt, eds, *Australians, 1938*, Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, Sydney, 1987, p 90

[126] Read, *Stolen Generations*, p 16

from the minority who had no parents or extended family and neither they nor anyone else knew where they came from.

A few children like this did get lost in the system, it is true, as shown by the example in Chapter Two of two boys at the Waterfall tuberculosis sanatorium in 1925. But even in cases of this kind, the board's response was to investigate their background, and if possible return them to the stations from where they came, where they were placed under the care of the local station manager. In short, the handful of statements made by the board and its members in the 1910s declaring their objectives were to remove children from stations and reserves permanently, were essentially hollow. At no time in its existence did the Aborigines Protection Board have the authority to prevent children from going home once their apprenticeship was complete.

THE CONSPIRACY TO REDUCE THE ABORIGINAL BIRTHRATE

Peter Read has argued that that in the early twentieth century the Australian authorities began to realize that the Aborigines were not 'dying out' as once thought. Instead, the number of half-castes and others of part-Aboriginal descent were increasing. So instead of being rid of the Aboriginal race by natural causes, governments decided they had to do the job themselves. In 1999, Read wrote:

> We can now pinpoint some of the motives for separation, both political and convenient. Underlying the authorities' endless divisions of 'half-caste', 'quadroon' and 'octoroon' was the principal that, in the long term, Aborigines were not wanted — anywhere. Their extinction, it seemed, would not occur naturally after all, but would have to be arranged. It is in this way that we should interpret the ironically named Aboriginal Protection Acts which were passed by all the mainland governments by 1912 (for example, Western Australia 1905, South Australia 1911) which allowed for the permanent removal of children. Their mainspring was that the Aboriginal population had increased, was increasing and ought to be diminished. The removal and institutionalization of the children was to be the principal weapon of the new Acts.[127]

Unfortunately, Read did not provide any documentary evidence to support the extraordinary claim that 'their extinction ... would have to be arranged'. He provided no quotations from policy statements, speeches, reports or even the Acts he cites in support. All he offered was his own opinion.

In this he was more than matched by Heather Goodall, Professor of History at the University of Technology, Sydney. In her book *Invasion to Embassy*, Goodall agreed that at the start of the twentieth

[127] Read, *Rape of the Soul*, p 22

century there was a movement by the authorities to reduce the Aboriginal population. At the time, she argued, Social Darwinism was at its height in Australia and the rise of the racist theory of eugenics created concerns about racial hygiene and purity. She claimed the Australian authorities decided to reduce the birthrate of the working classes and other undesirable social groups. She alleges white society found these groups a menace because their biology determined their antisocial behaviour. She claims Aborigines were a particular source of dread: 'the increase and cultural assertiveness of a racially distinct minority group was viewed with fear and alarm '.[128] Hence, Goodall argued, the policy of Aboriginal apprenticeship was devised to solve the social problem identified by these theories. She wrote:

> The Board stated quite openly in its reports and minutes that it intended to reduce the birthrate of the Aboriginal population by taking adolescent girls away from their communities. Then it intended that the young people taken in this way would never be allowed to return to their homes or to any other Aboriginal community. The 'apprenticeship' policy was aimed quite explicitly at reducing the numbers of identifying Aboriginal people in the State.[129]

Victoria Haskins took the case one step further. Because some Aboriginal girls became pregnant to white men during their apprenticeship, Haskins interpreted this as proof of the genocidal intentions of the Aborigines Protection Board: 'the apprenticeship policy might indeed be construed as a deliberate attempt by the State to breed out the race.'[130] Inara Walden, the curator of the Museum of Sydney, also agreed these were the board's aims:

> Its motives were clearly enunciated in its own reports and speeches to Parliament: to reduce the Aboriginal birthrate and stem growing numbers of 'half-caste' children; to integrate Aboriginal children into white society as 'useful' labourers, and to prevent the children it removed from main-

[128] Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, pp 118–19, citing Pat Quiggin, *No Rising Generation: Woman and Fertility in Late Nineteenth Century Australia*, Department of Demography, Australian National University, 1988

[129] Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, p 120. Inara Walden has dutifully repeated Goodall's notion: 'The Board's fears for girls "morality" would seem to be thinly disguised references to its aims to prevent pregnancies and keep the birthrate down.' Inara Walden, '"To Send Her to Service": Aboriginal Domestic Servants', *Aboriginal Law Bulletin*, 3, 76, October 1995, p 13

[130] Victoria Haskins, '"A Better Chance"? Sexual Abuse and the Apprenticeship of Aboriginal Girls under the NSW Aborigines Protection Board', *Aboriginal History*, 28, 2004, p 35

> taining links with their original communities, families, languages and culture.[131]

Goodall's book did not give any specific reference for her charge. Instead, her footnote referred readers to the Aborigines Protection Board's annual reports for the entire period 1906 to 1923. Walden provided no source of any kind. In a separate article Goodall repeated the accusation:

> The 1915 policy was explicitly aimed, first, at ending the identification of the non-'full-blood' members of the Aboriginal population with those designated 'full-blood'; and secondly, at reducing the Aboriginal birth rate by removing girls 'approaching the age of puberty' from Aboriginal communities.[132]

In this second article, Goodall sourced the motive to the board's reports for 1910, 1912, 1920–21, 1922–23 and 1923–24. She did not indicate any page numbers in these reports where this objective was purportedly stated. Nor did she offer any full-sentence, verbatim quotation from someone on the board actually saying this, so her claim was not easy to pursue. I read the board's reports not only for the years she suggested but also for the entire period of its existence looking for any mention it might have made about an intention to reduce the Aboriginal birth rate. I could not find anything resembling Goodall's assertion that it advocated this 'quite openly'.

It is certainly true that the board focused a great deal of attention on girls who were at or approaching the age of puberty. But in the records Goodall cites, its concerns were clearly about their sexual vulnerability. In the 1922–23 annual report, the only pertinent statement is the following rationale for the Cootamundra Girls' Home:

> In most cases these children were rescued from neglected conditions on Reserves &c. where they would invariably lapse into a life of vice if not taken charge of before reaching the age of puberty.[133]

To present this to readers as evidence of a conspiracy to reduce the state's Aboriginal population is to completely distort the plain meaning of the text. The same is true of the 1923–24 annual report, in which the only statement relevant to this issue is the following:

> No one is allowed to remain in idleness on a Reserve, there to get into trouble and raise another generation of illegitimate children who would

[131] Inara Walden, 'Step Brings Back Some Humanity', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 February 2008, p 16

[132] Heather Goodall, '"Saving the Children": Gender and the Colonization of Aboriginal Children in NSW, 1788 to 1990', *Aboriginal Law Bulletin*, 2, 44, 1990, p 7 and p 9 n 13

[133] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1922–23*, p 1

> also become a burden on the State. The problem is thus gradually solving itself as the younger Aborigines are being educated to something higher and have no wish to return to the level of camp life, thus ensuring that in time the necessity for Aboriginal Reserves will be a thing of the past.[134]

In the context of the board's long-term concerns, the clear meaning of this statement is not a determination to suppress the birth rate but to suppress the sexual licence of teenage girls and their unemployed boyfriends and to end the intergenerational cycle of economic dependency of their offspring. Rather than seeking to reduce the number of Aborigines, the board's aim was to educate them to 'something higher'. An expression of this kind, of course, is certain to raise the hackles of Aboriginal activists since it assumed that mainstream European culture was superior to that of the camps. But the board had a very strong case. It was trying to encourage Aborigines to adopt cultural values it thought were better for them, while at the same time trying to discourage cultural values it was convinced were degrading and destructive.

Throughout the board's existence from 1883 to 1968 — an era largely devoid of effective contraception measures — discouraging the sexual activity of girls in their early teenage years was seen as the key to preparing them for marriage and motherhood. The delay of sexual activity until marriage was the price of entry to the modern workforce and to a decent family life. Girls of thirteen, fourteen and fifteen years of age who had casual affairs and became pregnant forfeited their chances to both. Their boyfriends were either too poor or too feckless to support them. Their sisters and girlfriends, and in many cases their own mothers and aunts, were often in the same position as they were. Without a male provider, these girls and their babies were left dependent on charity and state handouts. Unless the cycle of dependency could be disrupted, their children would repeat the same pattern of behaviour.

This was not a narrative exclusive to the Aboriginal camps of New South Wales. The same story has been found in both the white and black underclasses of Britain and the United States for as long as social science has investigated the issue. Until the emergence of effective contraception in the mid-1960s, the attempt to restrict the sexual activity of adolescent girls was a policy prescription of every welfare agency in the English-speaking world that administered to those of the same age, irrespective of their colour or ethnic origin. None of these measures were ever targeted exclusively at Aborigines. The historians of Aboriginal Australia who have preferred to spin a grand

[134] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1923–24*, p 2

conspiracy theory, rather than familiarize themselves with this wider welfare framework, do not deserve to be taken seriously.

As for Goodall's hypothesis that the board devised its conspiracy in order to fulfil the Social Darwinist program of social engineering by eugenics, here again her work is devoid of evidence. She does not produce even one statement from anyone on the board declaring support for such ideas. This is not surprising. In my reading of the 85 years of the board's literature, I did not find these ideas mentioned once, either overtly or obliquely. In fact, at no point do these records give the slightest impression that anyone on the board had even heard of these intellectual theories.

MARRIAGE AND THE 'DYING RACE' MYTH

There is not only no evidence that the Aborigines Protection Board saw a growing Aboriginal population as a menace, but there is very good evidence that, in both its intentions and their outcomes, it acted to foster marriage between Aboriginal people and Aboriginal population growth. As I argued above, the board had no power to prevent young people from returning home once they completed their apprenticeship, and the majority actually did so. From 1919 onwards, the board itself was advocating one very good reason why they should return: to find a marriage partner. This policy provided complete disproof of the claim that the board wanted to render the Aboriginal race extinct. In June 1919, it resolved:

> That girls who are taken from the stations to be taught in houses away from their particular station should be allowed to return to their parents for a time after they have attained the age of 18 years so that if they desire to marry an aboriginal they may have the opportunity to do so.[135]

The historians of the Stolen Generations have never acknowledged the existence of this and similar public statements by the board. Within a short period of the 1915 amendment, the board had disowned any notion of permanent removal as both unworkable and undesirable. Instead, it advocated permanent *return*. Its 1924–25 annual report again emphasized the advantages of returning home to find someone to marry:

> [The Board's] object is to save the children from certain moral degradation on the reserves and camps, and to give them a chance to reach maturity, after which they are given every facility to return either on holiday or *permanently*, according to their wish, to their own districts, where they are expected to take up suitable employment. Here they have

[135] Aborigines Protection Board, Minutes of meeting, 25 June 1919

> an opportunity of meeting people of their own colour, and in many instances they marry and settle down in homes of their own.[136]

The board felt called upon to publicly explain this policy after an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in October 1924 had chastised it for apparently inhibiting Aborigines from marrying one another and thus contributing to the demise of the race. 'Aborigines. Race Dying Out. Fate of Girls.' said the article's three-line headline. The *Herald* argued that the different training provided for girls and boys had led to the geographic separation of the sexes. Girls were trained for employment in domestic service, for which most demand came from the cities, while the boys were prepared for only rural occupations.

> For the young men the city is practically a proscribed area. They find employment in the country, being scattered far and wide.[137]

The article estimated that 200 young women had been removed from the Aboriginal marriage market in rural New South Wales because of their employment as 'nurse girls' and servants in Sydney. This criticism remained a live issue for some time. Heather Goodall suggests the article had its origins among an emerging group of Aboriginal political activists and their sympathizers in Sydney.[138] The board's 1925–26 annual report responded to it again:

> the Board ... fully recognized that these young people should not be deprived of the opportunity to marry and settle down. It was, therefore, arranged that upon the extirpation of their term of apprenticeship they should be returned to their own districts for a holiday, after which they are given the opportunity of securing another approved situation in the district [that is, the district they originally came from] or returning to their former employment. Thus they had the opportunity of meeting young people of their own colour, and during the past twelve months over thirty suitable marriages have resulted.[139]

There is oral history that supports the board's contention, and also paints a quite different picture from Goodall and the *Herald* about how its policies impacted on Aboriginal communities. In her recollections of growing up at Cumeroogunga from 1922 to 1929, the daughter of the station's white school teacher, Winifred Burrage, described her impressions of the apprenticeship system for girls:

> It was also the custom for them to get jobs when they left school, with people in the district. I think that was a modified form of the apprentice-

[136] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1924–25*, p 2 (emphasis added)
[137] 'Aborigines. Race Dying Out. Fate of Girls', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 October 1924, p 12
[138] Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, pp 151–2
[139] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1925–26*, p 3

> ship, because the pay was adjusted. I do know that sometimes young women who had served their apprenticeships, and who had been with good mistresses, would return home to the stations well trained for domestic duty, with a sizeable little bank balance, and looking most fashionable and very stylishly dressed — most desirable to the young gentlemen at Cummeragunja.[140]

In any case, the idea that a program that only bound girls to their employers from the ages of fourteen to eighteen years could have led to the 'race dying out' was an exaggeration of tabloid proportions. The largest number of girls made wards of the board over any one four-year period was 155 from 1920 to 1923. Not all became domestic servants but, even if they had, this was hardly enough to have a dramatic effect on the size of the population.[141] Instead, the overall demographic trends at the time disproved the 'dying race' thesis outright.

In fact, the *Herald* article was actually published in the midst of a boom in the Aboriginal population. At the state census on 30 June 1924 the number of Aborigines in New South Wales stood at 7510, up no less than 14 per cent on the census result of 6580 in 1915, the year the amended Act was introduced purportedly to hasten the race's disappearance.[142] Indeed, as Chapter Two observed, by 1940, after 25 years of obligatory apprenticeships, the Aboriginal population had grown by no less than 65 per cent to 10,861, which more than matched the increase in the white population of Australia over a similar time span.[143]

The *Herald* article justified its gloomy prognosis by quoting an unnamed 'official of the department' who allegedly said the extinction of the race was inevitable. It is highly unlikely that anyone in authority at the board would have said this. At the time, the board was well aware from its own annual censuses and its budget outlays

[140] Interview recorded in Attwood, Burrage, Burrage and Stokie, *A Life Together, A Life Apart*, p 116

[141] Inara Walden has argued that, even though she calculated the total number of females made apprentices from 1916–1928 was 570, each indentured for at most four years, 'during any one year in the 1920s there would have been between 300 and 400 Aboriginal girls apprenticed to white homes': Walden, '"To Send Her to Service"', p 12. Her arithmetically implausible estimate of the number in service in the 1920s has been dutifully repeated by both the *Bringing Them Home* report (p 44) and Anna Haebich in *Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families 1800–2000*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 2000, p 184

[142] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1915*, p 2; *Report, 1923–24*, p 2

[143] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1940*, p 2. This report provides census results for each year from 1931 to 1940.

that the Aboriginal population was increasing. The growth, however, was mainly among half-caste Aborigines. The one group the board did believe in danger of dying out was that of full-blood Aborigines. However, in New South Wales the decline of the full-blood population was a consequence not of the apprenticeship system but of the continued inter-marriage between full-bloods and half-castes, a union that, necessarily, could not reproduce Aborigines of full descent. Instead of relying on the claims of political activists, the *Herald* should have done some proper research. Historians like Heather Goodall and Peter Read, who have repeated the newspaper's claims without reporting the true population trends,[144] have equally failed to do their job properly.

In summary, it is true that in 1910 and 1911 the board's annual reports did advocate the permanent removal of young people from Aboriginal reserves. It also wanted to close Aboriginal reserves because it saw them producing dysfunctional communities that harboured a handout mentality. This advocacy, however, was essentially empty since the board never acted upon it. The board's primary responsibility was to provide welfare services to these reserves. This responsibility, and the government funding that allowed it to be undertaken, expanded inexorably every decade from the early 1910s to the end of the 1930s. Permanent removal of Aboriginal children never operated in practice. By 1919, the board publicly advocated young people return home to find a marriage partner. By 1924, it responded to press criticisms by publicly reassuring government that permanent removal was not part of its intention. The board's long-term practice overwhelmingly confirmed this position. Two-thirds of those separated from their families were not infants but teenagers of workforce age. When they left home, they were not stolen forever but apprenticed to employers for four years or less. The appropriate model was not the Nazi *Lebensborn* but a country employment agency.

OUTCOMES OF THE APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEM

Did the board fulfil its stated objectives, that is, was its apprenticeship policy effective? One measure of this is the job retention rate of youth it placed with employers. If an apprentice remained on the job long enough to gain a track record and to pick up some employment-related skills then the placement could be judged a success. Of those

[144] Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, p 152; Read, *Rape of the Soul*, p 152. Read claimed the board 'replied' to this article by agreeing that 'the extinction of the race is inevitable'. But the board itself did not reply, as far as I could tell from a search of its minutes and reports at the time.

Aboriginal youth for whom there is a record of these matters, no less than 82 per cent remained with the same employer for five months or more.[145] Some 5 per cent went into an institution (either a hospital, mental institution, prison, convent or a welfare home), while 13 per cent absconded from their employers or never had a job with one employer that lasted for five months. An 82 per cent rate of stable employment for youth from such disadvantaged backgrounds is, on any reasonable reckoning, an unequivocal success. It compares well with the outcomes of apprenticeship schemes for disadvantaged white youth in the late nineteenth century. Of the 223 boys sent out as apprentices from the Sydney training ship *Vernon*, a total of 31 absconded or had their indentures cancelled.[146] This was a failure rate of 14 per cent from an institution personally founded by Henry Parkes and regarded as a showpiece of welfare reform of the period.

These outcomes are also consistent with a study of the same Aborigines Protection Board Ward Registers by Inara Walden, who looked at those girls who had been employed as domestic servants. She found that 14 per cent of girls absconded from their employers.[147] Strangely, Walden thinks this absconding rate demonstrates how strongly these girls 'resisted their employers through defiant behaviour'. Anyone familiar with the long history of similar programs for destitute white children would regard the fact that 86 per cent of these Aboriginal girls did *not* abscond, but stayed with their employers, a remarkably positive result.

[145] Ward Registers, 1916–1928, Aborigines Protection Board, NSW State Archives. The Ward Registers have records of this kind for 691 youths. Of these, 564 worked for five months or more with at least one employer, while 127 had no job that lasted that long.

[146] John Ramsland, *Children of the Back Lanes: Destitute and Neglected Children in Colonial New South Wales*, New South Wales University Press, Sydney, 1986, p 137

[147] Walden, 'To Send Her to Service', p 13 n 19. Even though the *Bringing Them Home* report treats Walden as a reliable source, I footnote her work here with no confidence in its findings, since some of her other statistics are wildly inaccurate. In a discussion of what happened to absconders, she claims 'seventy percent of female apprentices experienced some form of institutionalization' (p 13), whereas I can count only 103 out of 577 females, or 18 per cent, who went into an institution (this includes hospitals) at some time during or after their apprenticeship or employment. Walden also tries to show how poorly Aboriginal girls were paid by comparing their wages of 2s 6d a week as apprentices with the wages paid to *non*-apprenticed adult white domestic servants of 10s to 20s a week (p 13). Yet, as anyone familiar with the subject would know, *all* apprentices, white or black, were paid only a fraction of adult wages. I am not the only one to have problems with Walden's numerical skills — see also Haskins, '"A Better Chance?"', p 42 n 65.

What happened to those who did abscond? Heather Goodall has scripted a Hollywood-inspired scene of fugitives guided by an underground Aboriginal network to a safe house provided by Aboriginal activists in Sydney in the 1920s.[148] However, this network, as Goodall admits, is entirely hypothetical and there is no evidence it ever existed. Under the Apprentices Act, 1901, if they were found, absconders could be arrested by the police and returned to their employers. But just about the last thing any employer wanted on the premises was a defiant teenager who didn't want to work. In theory, a persistent absconder could be imprisoned. In reality, the Ward Registers show that most absconders were simply sent back to their parents or to the reserve or station they had come from, courtesy of a rail ticket paid for by the Aborigines Protection Board. In some cases, the Ward Registers record that the Aboriginal station manager came to collect them and take them back home.[149]

The final but by no means the least telling feature of the board's apprenticeship policy was the *proportion* of Aboriginal children it sent out to employers. They constituted but a small fraction of the population. From the time the board became serious about implementing this policy in 1912, until it lost its authority to do so in 1940, it made wards of some 1600 children and temporarily separated them from their communities. More than 90 per cent of them started work as apprentices.[150] As Chapter Two recorded, between 1912 and 1928 the average of 48 new separations a year amounted to about 1.8 per cent of the state's approximately 2700 Aboriginal children in the 1910s and 1920s. From 1929 to 1940, the average of 75 new separations a year amounted to about 1.9 per cent of the state's average of 4000 Aboriginal children in the 1930s. But by 1940, when the population of apprentices totalled only 50 youths, they amounted to 1.1 per cent of the state's 4734 Aboriginal children.[151] Whichever period

[148] Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, pp 151–2

[149] See, for example, Ward Registers, Aborigines Protection Board, State Archives of NSW, files no. 11, 92, 333 and 685

[150] The Ward Registers show that more than 90 per cent of separated children were eventually sent to employment and almost all of them started work as apprentices. However, there is anecdotal evidence of a small number of boys leaving Aboriginal stations to work in the pastoral industry and earning full adult pay of around £60 per year. For two examples see Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1920–21*, p 4

[151] The published Aboriginal censuses for New South Wales in the 1920s and 1930s did not provide a separate breakdown for children, but we do know that the population of children in 1912 was 2844, in 1918 was 2677, in 1937 was 4246, and in 1940 was 4734. Estimates in the text derive from these figures plus the trend change in the total population over the same timespan:

you look at, the board's objective in the 1910s for *all* Aboriginal children to eventually undertake an apprenticeship was never even close to being realized. Given the board's early enthusiasm for the scheme, this outcome fell far short of its hopes. The board was never able to meet its own targets, let alone to conduct some secret agenda to put an end to the Aboriginal race.

By 1940, the apprenticeship system for Aborigines was in terminal decline. From a total of 10 boys and 40 girls in 1940, the number fell to 12 boys and 14 girls in 1948. In the 1950s, the average number of new apprentices added each year was only 10.[152] This occurred largely because, when the Aborigines Protection Board was reconstituted as the Aborigines Welfare Board, its new 1940 Act reverted to the position that prevailed before 1915 when a court hearing, and not simply the decision of an officer of the board, was required to make an Aboriginal child a ward. This shifted the emphasis from employment and training to welfare criteria. Only children found by a court hearing to be neglected, destitute or orphans, or children placed at the request of their parents or guardians, subsequently became wards.

Hence a much smaller number of youth than in the previous two decades became the board's responsibility. The Kinchela and Cootamundra homes continued to operate with an average of around 50 children each, but the major decline was in teenage apprenticeships. Even though both Commonwealth and state governments from this point onwards publicly declared assimilation to be their primary goal, they gave up their most effective means of achieving this when in the post-war period they all but discarded apprenticeship from their range of policy options.

THE BRIEF TRIAL OF WHITE FOSTER CARE

> Massive intervention by the state in the lives of Aboriginal families became the central catastrophe only in twentieth-century Aboriginal Australia. The nineteenth-century desire to 'save' the children was now overlain by a much more pragmatic and sinister intention to scatter Indigenous children through white institutions and homes.
>
> — Peter Read, *A Rape of the Soul So Profound*, 1999 [153]

Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1912*, p 21; *Report, 1918*, p 4; *Report, 1919–20*, p 1; *Report, 1940*, pp 2–3; *Aborigines Protection: Report and Recommendations of the Public Service Board*, 1940, p 11

[152] Aborigines Welfare Board, *Report, 1940*, p 3; *Report, 1948*, p 4. Reports from 1953 to 1963 usually provided these figures in appendix A.

[153] Read, *Rape of the Soul*, p 23

Before 1940, the Aborigines Protection Board had confined 'boarding out' to apprenticeships. It wanted Aboriginal children to learn white standards of housekeeping and hygiene, but it never sought to make white parents substitutes for Aboriginal parents, even in the case of orphans. However, in 1943 an amendment to the Aborigines Protection Act by the McKell Labor government gave the new Aborigines Welfare Board the authority to board out the children committed to its care.[154] It soon began experiments in the foster care system.

The 1943 amendment also required the board's numbers to be expanded to accommodate two elected representatives of the Aboriginal people. One was William Ferguson, the state's chief activist of the 1930s, whose Aborigines Progressive Association had been partly responsible for the parliamentary inquiry in 1937 and the subsequent Public Service Board report that became the catalyst for changing the board's structure and operations. The other was Alexander Solomon, elected as the representative of the state's full-blood Aborigines. Both men became board members in October 1944. Solomon was replaced in 1946 by Walter Page, another activist in the Aborigines Progressive Association. He and Ferguson held office throughout the development and initial implementation of the foster family boarding-out program.[155] For the rest of the board's existence, two elected Aboriginal representatives always remained directors.

In 1945, the board tried fostering out children who it thought 'temperamentally unsuited' to institutional life. It placed them with 'approved Aboriginal families', most of whom lived on Aboriginal reserves and stations.[156] The number was small and sporadic at first — ten children in 1945, three in 1948, eight in 1949 — but by the 1950s the practice had become the preferred welfare option. Children were sent to the institutions at Kinchela and Cootamundra only reluctantly. There were more placements each year to Aboriginal foster families than to either of the two institutions. The 1953 report observed:

> The best substitute for its own home is a foster home, with competent and sympathetic foster parents. Failing this, the only alternative is a Home under management of the Board's own officers.

[154] Aborigines Welfare Board, *Report, 1945*, p 6

[155] Aborigines Welfare Board, *Report, 1945*, p 5; *Report, 1946*, p 2; *Report, 1947*, p 2

[156] Aborigines Welfare Board, *Report, 1945*, p 6; *Report, 1948*, p 4; *Report, 1949*, p 4

> The Board finds difficulty in securing an adequate number of suitable foster homes and for this reason is forced to maintain two homes for wards, one at Kinchela for boys and one at Cootamundra for girls.[157]

In its submission to the Human Rights Commission inquiry in 1996, Peter Read's Link-Up organization discussed this policy but falsely described it as the fostering of Aboriginal children into *white* households. It claimed that 'with the 1943 amendment the Board began to move away from institutionalization and towards placing, especially very young Aboriginal children, into non-Aboriginal families'. It went on to assert that by 1958, no fewer than 90 of the 116 Aboriginal wards boarded out were with non-Aboriginal families.[158] The *Bringing Them Home* report, as usual, did no research of its own but simply cut-and-paste this claim by Read into its own history of child removals in the period. Both the submission and the report are quite deceptive on this topic. Read either did not know or declined to tell his readers that in the 1940s and early 1950s, the only foster parents the board used were 'approved Aboriginal families'. Read and *Bringing Them Home* are also unreliable about the number of Aboriginal children who were for a short period in the mid-1950s fostered out to white households.

It was only in 1956 that the board's annual report spoke for the first time about placement with non-Aboriginal families. Its language implies that the notion was a novel one at the time. Of the total of 93 wards the board sent to foster families that year, 30 went to white families.

> [I]n view of the fact that many of the wards in the Board's care are of light caste, efforts were made late in 1955 to secure foster homes for these children amongst white people. Furthermore, this was regarded as being a positive step in implementing the Board's policy of assimilation. Publicity was given in the city Press to this matter, and the response was most gratifying. It was possible to place over thirty children in such homes, and after a trial period of six months, the scheme has proved an unqualified success.[159]

In its annual report for 1957, the board offered fewer details but still lauded the program. It did not, however, report how many of its wards were again fostered out to white families and how many to Aboriginal families.

> Many worthy citizens in the white community have offered their services as foster parents, and quite a number of aboriginal children are happily

[157] Aborigines Welfare Board, *Report, 1952–53*, p 6

[158] Link-Up, *In The Best Interests of the Child?*, pp 88–92; *Bringing Them Home*, p 48

[159] Aborigines Welfare Board, *Report, 1955–56*, pp 4, 9

placed in the homes of these people. Others are boarded out with selected aboriginal families.[160]

The experiment was an attempt to reduce the number of children in institutions — especially the Cootamundra Girls' Home whose population was immediately reduced by 40 per cent — by supplementing the normal use of Aboriginal families as foster carers with additional white families. The board took this approach because, although it asked local welfare officers and rural police to recommend suitable Aboriginal foster parents, it could not find enough of them for the number of children it sought to place.[161]

The Aborigines Welfare Board's reports for 1956 and 1957 were its first and last to mention any attempt to place Aboriginal children with white families. No explanation was subsequently given why the program lost favour. It was a short-term experiment that was quickly and quietly shelved. There was no total figure published by the board of how many children went to white households. *Bringing Them Home* claimed that by 1958 the total was 90, but provided no checkable source.[162] But even if this was true, 90 indigenous children placed with non-indigenous families because not enough Aboriginal families were willing to do the job is a small number that does not warrant political point-scoring, especially the kind attempted by the *Bringing Them Home* report.[163] In any case, by the 1960s the board's annual reports were re-stating its traditional policy:

> The Board recognises the generally accepted principle that it is the innate heritage of a child to be brought up in its own home, under the care of natural parents and there is no completely satisfactory substitute for them. Some parents, unfortunately, despite all efforts on their behalf, prove themselves incapable or unsuitable to be entrusted with this important duty and the Board is forced to take the necessary action for the removal of the child.

[160] Aborigines Welfare Board, *Report, 1956–57*, pp 4, 8

[161] In 1956, the number of wards in the Cootamundra Girls' Home fell from 47 to 29. The following year, however, it was up to a more normal total of 45 again. Aborigines Welfare Board, *Report, 1955–56*, p 9; *Report, 1956–57*, p 10; Link-Up, *In the Best Interests of the Child?*, p 92, discusses efforts by the Aborigines Welfare Board to find suitable Aboriginal families. It cites Minutes of the Aborigines Welfare Board, 19 April 1950

[162] *Bringing Them Home*, p 48, cited as its source a 1983 article by Read in the journal *Aboriginal History*, a reference it took from a submission from the Link-Up organization. However, the 1983 journal article made no mention of 90 children adopted to white households. The Human Rights Commission inquiry, as usual, did not bother to check the accuracy of the submission's claim.

[163] *Bringing Them Home*, p 48

> The most satisfactory alternative is a foster home with competent and sympathetic foster parents. Failing this it is necessary to admit a child to one of the two homes established by the Board and staffed by its own officers.[164]

After the board's demise in 1969, the fostering out program began again, but the numbers were never large. Legal academic Richard Chisholm, who had access to information from the New South Wales Department of Youth and Community Services, wrote that in 1980 foster care had become the dominant policy response, even though too few Aboriginal families were volunteering. That year, 200 Aboriginal children were placed with white foster parents and 30 with Aboriginal foster parents.[165] That was the last year of the program. In 1981, Read himself ensured its end. His pamphlet accusing its administrators of genocide, published with a foreword endorsing its findings by the state Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Frank Walker, scared off both departmental officers and prospective white parents. After that, neglected and abused Aboriginal children in New South Wales were left where they were on grounds of cultural sensitivity.

THE AWKWARD EXAMPLES OF FAITH BANDLER AND PEARL GIBBS

One non-Aboriginal couple who adopted an Aboriginal child as their foster son at this time was Faith Bandler, the daughter of an Indian woman and a New Hebrides (Vanuatu) sugarcane labourer, and her husband Hans Bandler, an Austrian Jew. The boy Peter, who had been found abandoned in a park when a baby, remained part of the Bandler family from 1959 when he was aged two, until he was twelve.[166] The Bandlers moved in the same Communist Party circles in Sydney as Pearl Gibbs, who at the time of the white foster care experiment was an Aboriginal-elected director of the Aborigines Welfare Board. Bandler and Gibbs were close friends and political colleagues. In 1956 they co-founded the Australian Aboriginal Fellowship.[167] Gibbs was also a member of the Aborigines Progressive Association, the Australian Aborigines League, and the Communist

[164] Aborigines Welfare Board, *Report, 1961-62*, p 9. See very similarly worded statement in *Report, 1952–53*, p 6

[165] Richard Chisholm, *Black Children: White Welfare? Aboriginal Child Welfare Law and Policy in New South Wales*, Social Welfare Research Centre, University of New South Wales, April 1985, p 73

[166] Marilyn Lake, *Faith: Faith Bandler, Gentle Activist*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2002, pp 87–8

[167] www.australianbiography.gov.au/subjects/bandler/interview1.html

Party front, the Union of Australian Women.[168] She stood for election to the Aborigines Welfare Board and served a three-year term as director from 1954 to 1957. Bandler and Gibbs were among the leading non-government figures in the 1967 Aboriginal campaign for constitutional amendment.

Gibbs was a critic of the board and wanted it abolished, but she never made any public objection to its practice of placing Aboriginal children with white foster families, even though the practice coincided with her time as a board member. She was privy to all the information before the board about its adoptions policy yet she never made any public case against it. She never reproached Bandler for adopting an Aboriginal child into her non-indigenous family and remained her close friend while the boy was growing up. If Gibbs, a major figure in Aboriginal politics from the Day of Mourning in 1938 to the referendum for constitutional change in 1967, did not find any grounds for complaint about this issue, it says much about contemporary Aboriginal concerns on this issue. Peter Read and the Human Rights Commission do not name them specifically but, to be consistent, their charge of genocide should have extended to all those engaged in child adoption and fostering practices in this period, including the Aboriginal activists on the Aborigines Welfare Board. This is yet more evidence of how absurd and reckless the accusation has always been.

THE LAST DAYS OF ABORIGINES WELFARE BOARD

By the 1960s, the Aborigines Welfare Board was showing clear signs that it lacked both the expertise and the will to continue handling child welfare and teenage apprenticeships. From a post-war peak of 109 new committals and admissions in 1957, the annual number of wards gradually declined to 33 new committals in 1963, the last year figures were published. One particular incident that it reported with some bitterness in 1965 underlined the consequences of the long-term decline of its legislative authority.

> The Board reports with regret that twelve boys, accepted for employment at the beginning of the year by Australian Iron and Steel Pty Ltd, Port Kembla, were, for some reason, persuaded by their families or their friends that their apprenticeship was not a good idea, and that they should take some higher paid but, in the long term, less advantageous job. Unfortunately, they decided to relinquish their apprenticeships, despite counselling by the Board's Welfare Officers. Six or seven of the twelve

[168] 'Pearl (Brown) Gibbs 1901–1983', *Reconciliation Australia*, http://www.reconciliation.org.au/i-cms.isp?page=354; Lake, *Faith*, pp 54–60

> who left employment with the Company, are now out of work or are engaged in casual labouring occupations.[169]

That year the board reasoned that 'the present system tended to perpetuate a form of segregation' and decided to relinquish its care of wards and its efforts to gain them employment. It handed over control of these programs, together with the Kinchela and Cootamundra institutions, to the state's Department of Child Welfare. At the same time, the New South Wales Parliament appointed a joint committee of both its houses to inquire into the standard of living of the state's Aborigines. The impetus was a new public concern about the status of Aborigines and the discrimination that still existed within some rural districts. Inspired by the American civil rights movement, Aboriginal activist Charles Perkins and white university students had made a highly publicized 'freedom ride' by bus to northern New South Wales, where they emulated their American counterparts by denouncing segregation in employment, hotels and municipal swimming pools, and demanding integration.[170]

The parliamentary committee reported in September 1967 and the Chief Secretary in the New South Wales Liberal–Country Party government, Eric Willis, immediately accepted its critique that the Aborigines Welfare Board was perpetuating segregation not only in child welfare but also in housing, employment and education. The inquiry recommended that the provision of state services for Aborigines in these areas be transferred to the mainstream departments responsible for them and that the Aborigines Welfare Board be dissolved.[171] This took place in 1969 and meant that the long segregation of Aboriginal services, and of the people who used them, was officially at an end. Although disappointed at their disbanding, the board's chairman Arthur Kingsmill and vice-chairman Professor A. P. Elkin signed off their final report on a positive note. In a summary of the outcomes of policies that the *Bringing Them Home* report would later characterize as genocidal, Kingsmill and Elkin claimed credit for 'a remarkable advance' in Aboriginal affairs:

> All discriminatory legislation has been removed from the statutes; funds have been provided to rehouse hundreds of adversely accommodated families; Aborigines have been encouraged to become independent of Government and welfare agency assistance; progress has been such on Stations and Reserves that it has been possible in most centres to remove management; a home loan scheme to enable Aborigines to acquire homes

[169] Aborigines Welfare Board, *Report, 1965*, p 10. The board later responded to a parliamentary critique of its actions in *Report, 1968*, p 19

[170] Ann Curthoys, *Freedom Ride*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2002

[171] Aborigines Welfare Board, *Report, 1968*, pp 5, 16–19

> of their own choice has been implemented; an Educational Grants in Aid programme, designed to ensure that the rising generation receives an adequate education, is in operation and there is a deep well of public sympathy and interest on the part of the community. In all of these developments the Board has played a significant role and its officers have done more for the welfare of the Aboriginal people than any other group in the community.[172]

APPRENTICESHIP AND 'BOARDING OUT' FOR WHITE CHILDREN

One of the great deficiencies of the historians of Aboriginal Australia is that the only history most of them know is Aboriginal history. They venture out onto unfamiliar terrain rarely, and then only to filch a few scraps of information before scurrying back to the burrow of their sub-discipline. As a result, they think that everything done to Aboriginal children had motives peculiar to Aboriginal history. The possibility that policies for Aboriginal children might have been nothing but extensions of policies already being applied to white children has not occurred to them. Moreover, the thought that these policies might not even have originated in Australia but somewhere else entirely, has never entered their heads.

Yet, if any of them had made even a cursory investigation of the history of child welfare in Australia and Britain, they would have found examples of similar proposals, much the same legislation, and almost identical terminology. If they had looked further afield they would have found parallels and precursors among policies applied to white children in both the United States and Europe. This is something these historians have never wanted to contemplate. If policies for Aboriginal children were also applied to white children both here and abroad, then their story is on different ground altogether. Let me demonstrate this with a brief historical account the two child welfare policies on which the weight of the Stolen Generations thesis in New South Wales lies: apprenticeship and boarding out.

Apprenticeship is a very old way of introducing children to the workforce. It can be traced back to at least the thirteenth century when it was used to train youth in the technical skills of a particular trade and to inculcate the work ethic required of a tradesman. An apprenticeship was then a contract for up to seven years during which an apprentice lived in the house of his master. Parents purchased apprenticeships for their children or paid the tradesman an ongoing fee both to train a youth and provide his board and keep.[173]

[172] Aborigines Welfare Board, *Report, 1968*, p 15

[173] 'Introduction: Apprenticeship' in A. H. Thomas, ed., *Calendar of the Plea and Memoranda Rolls of the City of London, Volume Two*, London, 1929, at: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/ report.aspx?compid=36671

The apprenticeship system has continued to this day. It has proved a remarkably enduring institution. Apprenticeship has remained the principal means of introducing young people to the skilled trades in most of Europe and the English-speaking countries. Most people who have completed their indenture to become tradesmen wear the qualification as a badge of pride. It has always been a guarantee of status, employment and income.

Since the reign of Henry VIII in the sixteenth century, the English Poor Laws also used apprenticeship as a means of ameliorating the condition of poor children. Neglected and destitute children rescued both from the streets and from charitable institutions and workhouses have long been bound to masters in trades.[174] Over the centuries, a variety of religious and charitable impulses have inspired these efforts but most have used some version of the notion of breaking the cycle of poverty. By training poor boys and girls in specific skills and in general habits of industry, apprenticeship was not only a means of increasing the supply of skilled labour but also of rescuing children from dissolute parents and criminal subcultures. Hence, as well as its traditional role of reproducing qualified tradesmen, apprenticeship has functioned for several centuries as a means of rescuing the children of the lower orders.

In New South Wales from 1800 until the 1880s, the standard policy response to destitute white children was institutional care combined with apprenticeship. The Female Orphan School (1800) and the Female School of Industry, Sydney (1826) took in orphaned and destitute girls and the daughters of single parents, taught them elementary literacy and numeracy, plus sewing and housekeeping in preparation for initial careers as domestic servants, and eventually for marriage and motherhood. The Male Orphan School (1819) took boys of similar background, taught them literacy and numeracy, plus some of the skills needed for agricultural employment.

That a colonial orphanage for girls preceded that for boys derived from the greater concern of the authorities about girls' moral behaviour. The founders of these institutions were evangelically minded Christians who, like Sydney's Anglican Archdeacon Thomas Scott in 1826, deplored the dearth of moral standards in the colonial environment: 'so inveterate are the vicious habits of the parents, and so pernicious are the horrid examples constantly before the eyes of the child.'[175] They felt that the moral education for the rising generation

[174] Michael Horsburgh, 'The Apprenticing of Dependent Children in NSW Between 1850 and 1885, *Journal of Australian Studies*, 7, November 1980, pp 33–4

[175] Report on the Church and School Establishments by Archdeacon Scott, 1 May 1826, *Historical Records of Australia*, Series I, Vol. XXII, p 312

was the colony's only hope, and that girls were their most important targets because they would set the example for their own children. Girls were also more sexually vulnerable to both seduction and prostitution. This was especially so in an economy where women had few employment opportunities outside domestic service and prostitution was an enticing occupational option for poor teenage girls. The Female School of Industry targeted the 'urgent and extreme cases' of destitution, which could lead girls to 'suffer from evil, which, in a Colony constituted as this is, cannot but assail them'.[176]

John Ramsland's history of child welfare in nineteenth-century New South Wales confirms this picture. Of the Female Orphan School he wrote: 'The purpose of this school was to protect young orphan or destitute girls from sexual exploitation and a potential life of prostitution in the turbulent and unsettled times of the early colony.'[177] These assumptions and the welfare policies that derived from them remained intact for the next 120 years. As recently as the 1950s, white teenage girls caught selling sexual favours, or even those strongly suspected by social workers of doing so, could be arrested and institutionalized for being in moral danger.[178]

By the mid-nineteenth century the three main child welfare institutions in New South Wales were the Protestant Orphan School, the Catholic Orphan School and the Asylum for Destitute Children at Randwick. From the 1850s to the 1870s, these institutions sent 41 per cent of their inmates out to apprenticeship. Some 64 per cent went to domestic service, 27 per cent to agriculture and 9 per cent into the skilled trades.[179]

Children at the two Orphan Schools and the Randwick Asylum were usually apprenticed at age twelve for seven years, and at the Female School of Industry at age fourteen for four years. The legal framework for this was provided by the Apprentices Act of 1828 and the Orphan Apprentices Act of 1834. The former said all the laws of England governing masters and apprentices applied in New South Wales. The latter said if a child was confined to an institution, the

[176] *Annual Report of the Female School of Industry*, 1830–31, p 8, cited in Elizabeth Windschuttle, The Female School of Industry 1826–47, BA Hons thesis, Department of History, University of Sydney, 1977, p 10

[177] Ramsland, *Children of the Back Lanes*, p 223

[178] Donald McLean, *Children in Need: An Account of the Administration and Functions of the Child Welfare Department, New South Wales, Australia, With an Examination of the Principles Involved in Helping Deprived and Wayward Children*, Government Printer, Sydney, 1956, especially Chapter V, 'Field Work'

[179] Horsburgh, 'The Apprenticing of Dependent Children in NSW', pp 34–6, 50–51; Dickey, *No Charity There*, pp 9–10; Barry Bridges, The Sydney Orphan Schools, MEd Hons thesis, University of Sydney, 1973

directors of the institution had the power to send the child to apprenticeship. The child's parent or parents had a right of appeal against the terms of employment and to object to the employer chosen by the institution but, since most parents were from the poor and lower orders, they could exercise that right only with great difficulty.[180]

Once free and compulsory public education was introduced into New South Wales by the Public Instruction Act of 1880 it was no longer possible to apprentice 12-year-olds, since they were required to be at school. Hence apprenticeship commonly became a four-year contract that began at the school leaving age of fourteen years. This practice was fixed in law by the Apprentices Act of 1901. Employers paid apprentices' wages into a trust fund which provided a lump sum payment when the apprentice's term was complete. In the meantime, the apprentice received only pocket money as payment. This was sixpence a week in first year, the same as for Aboriginal apprentices.[181] By 1940, both the wages of white apprentices at their various ages and the pocket money they were given each week had increased substantially but nonetheless remained comparable to those paid to Aboriginal apprentices at the same time.[182]

In short, all the major features of Aboriginal apprenticeship in the early twentieth century — the kind of jobs provided for boys and girls, the age at commencement, the period of employment, the legal enforcement of contracts, the rate of payment, the pocket money system — had been all put in place for white children long before. The most contentious feature of Aboriginal apprenticeship in the eyes of orthodox historians — the Aborigines Protection Amending Act, 1915, which gave the authorities to right to act *in loco parentis* in determining the children to be apprenticed and the selection of their employer — had been in force for institutionalized white children under the same terms since 1834. From this perspective, the real effect of the 1915 amendment was to give Aboriginal stations and reserves the same standing as white welfare institutions and to treat their residents as dependent inmates. This can hardly be deemed racist because it reduced these Aborigines to a status to which destitute white children had long been subjected. Because most people living on Aboriginal stations and reserves were either entirely or largely dependent on government handouts, these places had always been, in effect, welfare institutions anyway. The main difference between

[180] Horsburgh, 'The Apprenticing of Dependent Children in NSW', pp 41–50

[181] Ramsland, *Children of the Back Lanes*, p 87

[182] *Aborigines Protection: Report and Recommendations of the Public Service Board*, p 18

them and institutions for white children was that their Aboriginal inmates were free to leave them whenever they chose.

The informed opinion of the period plus more recent assessments made with historical hindsight both indicate that nineteenth-century institutionalized white youth who were apprenticed to even the most indifferent masters fared better both physically and psychologically than poor youth left to their own devices. The evidence to the New South Wales Select Committee on the Condition of the Working Classes of the Metropolis in 1859 suggested this and historian Brian Gandevia confirmed it in 1978 in his classic study of Australian child welfare.[183] Hence in colonial Australia, apprenticeship retained its traditional appeal as a device through which welfare reformers could rescue the children of the poor.

The high point of the institutionalization of white children was the three decades from 1850 to 1880. Since the eighteenth century, institutions had been designed as places that would remove children from their previous environment of poverty, alcoholism, criminality and immorality. Instead of narrow back lanes, negligent parents and poor diet, the authorities imagined that if they placed children in grand buildings with pleasing gardens, provided them with professional staff, good food and clothing, and gave them religious instruction and vocational skills, the new environment would produce a new type of person.[184]

During these same decades, however, a movement emerged to make a profound critique of institutional care. Inspired by the portrait of children's institutions in the writings of Charles Dickens and by the visiting English critics Rosamond and Florence Hill, welfare reformers used the Sydney press to campaign against the 'barracks system' of orphanages (so named because some had been established in former military barracks). Critics charged that confining large numbers of children in dormitories allowed easy spread of infection. In 1867, one epidemic of whooping cough alone had claimed the lives of 77 children at the Randwick Asylum. In 1873, the Royal Commission into Public Charities condemned that institution's lack of individual attention to its charges. The commission was shocked to find the 800 children at Randwick were addressed by numbers because the super-

[183] Bryan Gandevia, *Tears Often Shed: Child Health and Welfare in Australia from 1788*, Pergamon Press, Sydney, 1978, p 111; Horsburgh, 'The Apprenticing of Dependent Children in NSW', p 53

[184] Ramsland, *Children of the Back Lanes*, pp 111–56; John Ramsland, 'An Anatomy of a Nineteenth Century Child-Saving Institution: The Randwick Asylum for Destitute Children', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, 70, 3, 1984; Rosamond and Florence Hill, *What We Saw in Australia*, Macmillan, London, 1875

intendent and matron could not remember their names. It recommended children be removed from institutions and boarded-out with selected families who would receive a maintenance payment. Reporting these findings, the Sydney press launched a campaign to 'empty the barracks' and to replace them with the system of 'boarding out'.[185]

The New South Wales government responded by enacting the State Children's Relief Act in 1881 and creating the State Children's Relief Board. Premier Sir Henry Parkes was an enthusiast for boarding out and appointed a man of like mind, Dr Arthur Renwick, as president of the new organization. Boarding out was a welfare program that began in Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century. By the 1850s, half the pauper children in major German cities were boarded out. The system was also established in France, Russia and the United States in the 1850s. In England, Charles Dickens lent his reputation as a social critic to support the scheme.[186]

In New South Wales, the 1881 Act allowed the State Children Relief Board to become the guardian of children currently in institutions and to place them with families either as boarders, adopted children or apprentices. The board's officers found appropriate homes, and inspected them and the children regularly. Parkes argued that by experiencing family life, the children would form family ties and develop their moral character. He supported the scheme on egalitarian grounds, saying it would reduce the ranks of the pauper class. It would also prevent boys from joining the criminal subculture and would reduce the chance of girls descending into promiscuity and prostitution.[187] Many of his constituents agreed. 'Boarding out' became a popular movement. The State Children's Relief Board soon found itself with more demand from would-be foster families than it had children to supply them. Boarding out quickly replaced institutional care. In 1885, the government ceased funding the Protestant and Catholic Orphan Schools and they closed down. The privately funded Randwick Asylum closed in 1916.

By 1909, of the state's nearly 4000 destitute white children, some 57 per cent of had been placed with foster parents as boarders with maintenance, while 41 per cent were boarding with families as apprentices.[188] The occupations to which these white children were

[185] Ramsland, *Children of the Back Lanes*, pp 159–220

[186] John Ramsland, 'The Development of Boarding-Out Systems in Australia 1860–1910', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, 60, 3, September 1974, pp 186–7; State Children's Relief Board, *Report of the President*, 27 April 1884, pp 4–9; *Report of the President*, 5 April 1886, p 5

[187] Ramsland, 'Development of Boarding-Out Systems', pp 190–5

[188] Ramsland, 'Development of Boarding-Out systems', p 196

apprenticed were almost identical to those provided for Aborigines. One State Children's Relief Board report described the destinations of 103 of its girls and 128 of its boys:

> All the girls were apprenticed to domestic service, and the majority of the boys have been apprenticed to the dairy farmers, with whom they had been boarded. The following are the details:— Boys indentured to farmers, 103; gardeners, 5; hairdressers, 2; grocers, 3; saddler, 1; bakers, 3; tailor, 1; painters, 2; butcher, 1; undertaker, 1; carpenter, 1; provision merchant, 1; storekeeper, 1; chemists, 3; total, 128.[189]

The most reliable historian of the boarding out system for poor white children, John Ramsland, has given the following assessment:

> No longer were destitute and homeless children held by legal restraints, locked away and out of sight except on formal occasions ... The growth of the New South Wales boarding-out scheme ended the period of dominance of the large-scale Victorian asylum for dependent children and ushered in the modern approaches based on individualization of care and treatment as well as a significant concern for the confidentiality of the individual child's circumstances. State dependent children were to be no longer paraded before the community in a public way to be pitied and patronized. Individual growth and development and the child's right to privacy became the central doctrines of advanced thinking in child social welfare in the late nineteenth century. [190]

It was these new ideas, and these positive outcomes for white children, that galvanized those responsible for Aboriginal child welfare from the 1880s until well into the twentieth century. Before 1940, the Aborigines Protection Board did not attempt to incorporate this whole package into its policies but it did select those aspects that it felt would work best for its charges. It made no attempt to board out Aboriginal children of school age into white families, and it still preserved a limited number of places in institutions for younger orphans and neglected children. But it copied the boarding-out system of apprenticeship almost exactly. It appointed home-finders to provide positions for Aboriginal youth, and inspectors to ensure the system remained on track. Indeed, the board duplicated the apprenticeship system for white children right down to training Aboriginal youth for identical occupations. It was only after 1943 that boarding out to foster families became the preferred welfare option, and then primarily to Aboriginal families.

Moreover, these developments fulfilled the very founding ambitions of welfare for Aborigines. When Inspector-General Edmund Fosbery and Phillip Gidley King MLC visited the Warengesda and

[189] State Children's Relief Board, *Report of the President*, 5 April 1886, p 29
[190] Ramsland, 'Development of Boarding-Out Systems', pp 196–7, 235

Maloga missions in 1882 as their prelude to joining the Aborigines Protection Board, they looked at the two institutions through the lens of the prevailing ideas about best practice in welfare for white children. This was why Fosbery and King said, as I noted earlier, they could not see 'any future advantages to be derived by the children by retaining them in an aboriginal asylum'. This was why they thought that if Aboriginal children were to gain employment, that outcome 'we conceive, would be best attained by "boarding out" the young of both sexes.'

They — and virtually everyone who followed them for the next 80 years — wanted Aboriginal children to have the same chance in life as white children of the working classes. In advocating and eventually establishing their own boarding out system for Aboriginal apprentices, these officials were applying what were at the time the best and brightest ideas for child welfare. How astonished they would have been to learn that one day their own society would condemn all their thoughts and deeds as an attempt to commit genocide, and that the parliament of a federated Australia would publicly apologize for their actions.

CHAPTER FOUR

The culture of the camps

IN January 1881, Sub-Inspector John Donohoe of the Sydney Water Police wrote a report about the behaviour of a group of Aborigines squatting in one of the boatsheds of the New South Wales government's Marine Board at Circular Quay. The boatshed was near the wharves where passengers embarked on Sydney Harbour steam ferries, and close to other wharves reserved for the colony's ships of war. The number of Aborigines was small but increasing, as was the level of disturbance they created. Sub-Inspector Donohoe wrote:

> At present they number eighteen blacks and half-castes, males and females, all huddled together in one sleeping-place. I have reason to believe that the shed is sometimes used for the purpose of prostitution, as men (Europeans) have been seen to leave the shed hastily on the approach of the police. One of the half-caste women is now in gaol, being convicted as a common prostitute. Their conduct of late has been of the worst description, as they obtain drink about the city, and in their drunken state, when they collect at the boat-shed, frequently assault each other in the most brutal manner, and cause crowds of people to assemble at the boat-sheds ... I consider them a nuisance to the neighbourhood, as they roam about town by day getting drunk, and wrangle and quarrel all night.[1]

Donohoe attached to his report a note sent him by one of his officers, Constable Prince F. Little, who wrote about himself in the third person:

[1] *Aborigines, Report of the Protector to 31 December 1882*, Report to Legislative Council, in *Votes and Proceedings, Legislative Assembly of New South Wales*, 1883, p 4

> The constable has been daily doing duty on the Circular Quay for over twelve months, and it has been almost a daily occurrence for these blackfellows to come about the Circular Quay begging, meeting with sympathizers, get drunk, and assault each other, their wives and children, in a most savage manner. This collects sometimes two or three hundred people, and frequently stopping the public thoroughfare. Some of them have been locked up and punished — in fact their conduct has been very bad in various ways, and they are a public nuisance. The constable has had a great many complaints made to him of their conduct, from all sorts of society. The constable has seen them pushing in and out of the excursion steamers while half drunk, to the annoyance of passengers, and sometimes endangering their lives by nearly knocking them overboard. The constable has on a great many occasions had to remove them from the various places where they misconduct themselves on the Circular Quay.[2]

These reports were part of a flurry of paperwork that circulated between the Aboriginal Protector, the Principal Under-Secretary, the Colonial Secretary, the Water Police Magistrate, and the Inspector-General of Police. The Aborigines were not remnants of the original Sydney Harbour tribes, but people who had drifted in to the city from the south coast districts of Kiama and the Illawarra, the Hunter Valley, and Cootamundra. Sub-Inspector Donohoe did not have the power to simply order them out of the city, or even out of the boatshed. Initially, none of them wanted to leave Sydney. Until the complaints about them became a public issue, the boatshed dwellers survived on the government rations then available to travelling Aborigines, and they were permitted to use the government boatshed as a shelter. Donohoe had to persuade the boatshed manager to ban them camping there, and had to offer the Aborigines free passages back to their own districts by steamer and rail. It took him eight months before they were gone.

At the same time there were two Aboriginal camps out near Botany Bay, one at La Perouse housing about 35 people, the other on the Botany reserve with fifteen people. Aboriginal visitors from Wollongong, George's River and Burragorang supplemented the camps' permanent inhabitants. In 1882, as Chapter Three recorded, George Thornton the Aboriginal Protector had given the La Perouse people boats and fishing tackle in an effort to make them independent fishermen. However, they were also supplied with government rations in the form of orders on grocery shops. By 1883 their enthusiasm for fishing had waned. According to a report by the local police officer, Senior Constable John Byrne, the Aborigines travelled every Saturday from La Perouse to Sydney where they collected their orders for rations, and promptly traded them for alcohol. He wrote:

[2] *Aborigines, Report of the Protector to 31 December 1882*, p 4

> generally on their return to camp the majority would be in a semi-state of intoxication, and the senior constable noticed that many of them returned without rations, having either sold or lost them on the way. It was on one of those occasions, viz., May 7th, 1881, the aboriginal Bundong fell from the roof of a bus and was killed.

Byrne's report said there were a large number of young girls in the camps, who attracted the attention of the visiting missionary, Daniel Matthews of the Maloga Aboriginal station on the Murray River. He persuaded most of the females, some of whom had husbands, to leave Botany and go with him to Maloga. Once they had gone, the camp on the Botany reserve closed down but the La Perouse settlement remained. Byrne described the camp ethos that prompted Matthews's intervention:

> Up to the time of Mr Matthews' visit they very seldom did any work of any kind, and their conduct was a great nuisance to the neighbourhood of Botany in consequence of their intemperate habits, quarrelling with each other in camp; and again, a number of young men (Europeans) used to visit the camp for immoral purposes; these people, it is presumed, gave them money which they spent in drink. The senior constable frequently visited their camp with a view to detect the intruders (Europeans), but they were always warned of his approach by the aboriginals or their associates.[3]

In March 1886, Daniel Matthews recorded his impressions of another visit he made to Sydney where he visited Aboriginal camps at North Sydney and La Perouse.

> We visited their miserable camps, and often saw them wandering about the streets of the city drunk, and begging of the passers by. Paddy and Dan in pathetic terms contrasted their condition with those at Maloga, and invited some to accompany us there ...
>
> On Saturday night in the busy crush of 'Paddy's Market' we met several groups of these poor things. As we approached I saw some of the young women in company with white men, who were leading them into drink and debauchery, which plainly revealed the fact to me that they were leading a life of prostitution. I called the attention of two constables to this, who told me they knew it all but had no power to prevent it.[4]

The first government census of New South Wales Aborigines taken in 1882 found the total population amounted to 8919 persons.[5]

[3] *Aborigines, Report of the Protector to 31 December 1882*, p 7

[4] Daniel Matthews. *Eleventh Report of the Maloga Aboriginal Mission Station, Murray River, New South Wales*, Echuca, 1886, p 26. Matthews saw the same scenes when he visited Sydney again in 1887: see his *Thirteenth Report*, 1888, p 3

[5] *Aborigines, Report of the Protector to 31 December 1882*, p 1

> Hence the groups described here represented only a fraction of that, less than 1 per cent. But they were the Aborigines most visible to the authorities in Sydney. Indeed, those at Circular Quay were the most conspicuous in the whole colony. To the official eye, they defined themselves as a social problem. Their behavioural characteristics were equally identifiable: drunken, noisy, lazy, sexually dissolute, and easily provoked to violence, especially against one another. The policy directions adopted over the subsequent 60 years were always taken with one eye focused on this image of Aboriginal camps.

THE FUNCTIONS AND ECONOMICS OF STATIONS AND RESERVES

When the Aborigines Protection Board was founded in 1883, it inherited 32 reserves in rural New South Wales. These were small Aboriginal settlements with sporadic populations that functioned as both camping sites and welfare depots for the supply of blankets and rations to Aboriginal travelers and seasonal workers. Some of the itinerants, especially the old and dependent, camped on them permanently. They were unmanaged sites where the local police were responsible for the handouts. They were sometimes referred to simply as 'camps' because this is what many of them started out as. By 1904, the number of reserves had expanded to 147. The board hoped that a number of them would turn into farming communities. In this period, the board lobbied the government continuously to grant it additional land in order to encourage the Aboriginal population to become self-sufficient smallholders.

> In view of the Board's determination that where possible the full-blooded aborigines and half-castes who are able to do so shall be compelled to support themselves and their families, they are fully seized of the need of retaining all the land now set aside for the use of the native tribes and of acquiring further suitable tracts of land from time to time as opportunities offer for their benefit.
>
> When land is set apart in this manner the Board invariably supply fencing wire on the aborigines obtaining and erecting the necessary posts, and assistance is given to enable them to erect comfortable dwellings. In many cases, too, where the soil is suitable the reserves are cultivated, and the aborigines encouraged to make the best possible use of their holdings, by the supply of farming implements and seed.[6]

At the same time, the board also fought off attempts by white settlers to encroach upon land reserved for Aborigines, even land not yet occupied. In 1905, the board made what it called a 'strong protest' to the Minister for Lands to prevent local white residents from securing land adjoining its Brungle station. It also successfully opposed a lease

[6] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1904*, p 3

on part of Shark Island in the Macleay River going to white settlers on the grounds that it was 'desirous of settling some of the aborigines thereon'.[7]

The board also operated what it called Aboriginal stations or managed stations. In the 1890s depression, the financial problems of the private organization, the Aborigines Protection Association, led it to cede to the government board the control of its three Christian missions at Cumeroogunga, Warangesda and Brewarrina. These village-like communities, with cottages and a school, were run by a white manager (the missionary), a matron (usually his wife) and a school teacher. By 1904 the board had expanded the original three missions to seven stations. By 1917 they numbered twenty and, even though some were subsequently closed down and new stations established elsewhere, the total remained about the same until the 1940s.

The board's managed stations and its bigger reserves housed a largely welfare dependent population. They were predominantly single mothers, deserted wives, widows and their children, the disabled, and Aborigines of both sexes too old to work or support themselves. At times when seasonal employment dried up, as it did for those working at shearing or vegetable and fruit picking or during periods of rural recession, their numbers were swelled by unemployed males, some of them husbands and fathers of the permanent female inhabitants, others their working-age sons. These men were also provided with rations in return for work on the station such as fencing, clearing, cultivation and construction. The board emphasized that its policy was not to allow those who could work to remain on the stations permanently, living on handouts. By 1898, it found there were too many able-bodied youths living permanently on some stations, so:

> it was decided to issue a Circular to all Local Boards and Managers of such stations, impressing upon them the desirability of furthering by every means in their power the aim of the Board, that all youths and girls, should, after receiving instruction, and when of an age fit to work for a livelihood, be placed in suitable service or induced to accept it. It was at the same time again pointed out that the reasons for forming such establishments were simply that they might be asylums for the aged, crippled, or infirm; that the children might be provided with schooling and instruction; and that a home might be provided for Aborigines where they could find means to labour for the support of their families; not a place where people — not Aborigines — of all ages and both sexes could idle their lives away as pensioners on the public.

[7] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1905*, p 3

It found the same problem still present in 1904:

> All the managers, however, have instructions that the young men are not to be encouraged to permanently reside on the station, and where possible are sent out to suitable situations. In the pastoral districts many of them are reported to earn good wages at the shearing-sheds, and they also obtain profitable employment from farmers and others during busy seasons of the year ... the Board have refused to authorize the issue of rations to any able-bodied men who could obtain employment. On the other hand they have allowed no case of hardship to go unheeded.[8]

This policy and these circumstances gradually allowed a number of stations to take on dual roles as welfare depots and employment agencies. At Wallaga Lake in 1903:

> The young men on the Station are not encouraged to remain on the Station, and they are able to obtain suitable employment at certain times of the year at the farms in the district, and from one of the Manager's monthly reports it appeared that forty-seven men from the Station were engaged in work of various kinds off the Station, earning from 15s to 30s per week.[9]

At Brewarrina in 1911:

> On the subject of employment for the Aborigines, it is quite customary for employers in the district to apply to the Manager of Brewarrina Station when they require men, and during the year twenty four of them have obtained positions in this way, usually at wages ranging from 20s to 30s per week, and food. One man earned £1 per day as a shearer during the season, being able to shear 100 sheep per day. Five of the youthful aborigines, too, were placed in positions as apprentices, and are giving satisfaction to their employers.[10]

At Cumeroogunga in 1912:

> Employment at good wages is easily obtainable in the district ... In one case, the manager was asked to provide the whole of the shearers and shed-hands at a station 300 miles distant, and was able to recommend sixteen men, who satisfactorily completed all the shearing, and a request has already been received for the supply of all the shearers, wool-rollers, piece pickers, and wool pressers for the same station in 1913 ... Unfortunately no children have been sent as apprentices, but the manager is usually able to recommend suitable young men and women for the constant demand he has for station and farm hands, general and domestic servants.[11]

[8] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1904*, pp 3, 5
[9] Aborigines protection Board, *Report, 1903*, p 7
[10] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1911*, p 7
[11] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1912*, p 8

By the late 1920s, the board reported that all seventeen of the state's Aboriginal stations performed this role, where:

> The Manager also acts as a kind of labour exchange and is able to keep his charges fairly constantly employed. Most of the stations now have the telephone connected, and employers take full advantage of this when wishing to engage assistance.[12]

It is important to recognize that the great majority of Aborigines of New South Wales in the 1880s, and, indeed, at any later time, were not like those at Circular Quay and La Perouse. Most were not given rations and shelter by the government. Most did not live on the reserves and managed stations that emerged in the late nineteenth century. The majority of the Aborigines of New South Wales always remained independent of the government. After the spread of white settlement throughout the colony, most Aborigines lived in rural districts and earned their living either through employment in the pastoral and farming industries, or as independent fishermen and farmers. Most indigenous bush workers supplemented their diet with fish or game they caught or killed themselves, as did most white settlers in rural Australia at the time. Many of them merged themselves into the wider population, taking advantage of the institutions of education, employment and marriage.

Most academic historians, most oral histories, and the published memoirs of Aboriginal activists from the 1920s to the 1960s consistently portray post-frontier Aboriginal life as if it was all lived on reserves, managed stations and missions. The 1983 television film about the Stolen Generations, *Lousy Little Sixpence*, researched by Alec Morgan and Heather Goodall, opened with the completely inaccurate declaration:

> Australia at the turn of the century. In the state of New South Wales, the Aboriginal tribes have been forced off their lands, and on to government-controlled reserves.[13]

Invariably, histories of this kind have been constructed on grievance. They have long complained about the lack of civil liberties, poor housing and inadequate diet experienced by those who remained dependent on these settlements. They pretend, quite falsely, that the Aborigines had no choice but to remain on the reserves. Since 1981, when Peter Read injected his thesis about stolen children into the overall narrative, their sense of injustice has deepened.

[12] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1927–28*, pp 1–2

[13] *Lousy Little Sixpence*, Alec Morgan director, Alec Morgan and Gerald Bostock producers, Sixpence Productions/Australian Film Commission, 1983

Unfortunately, when historians and other authors have paid the majority of independent Aborigines any attention they have been drawn to the spectacular failures, such as the murderer, rapist and fugitive Jimmy Governor, who provided the inspiration for Thomas Keneally's novel *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* and the Fred Schepisi film of the same name. Yet the above examples of the employment opportunities available to Aborigines at the time — with Cumeroogunga alone providing sixteen men to do all the shearing and wool processing for one outback sheep station in 1912 and 1913 — strongly suggest there must have been a great many Aborigines among what historian Russel Ward called the 'noble frontiersmen' of the outback pastoral industry.

Among the Clancies of the Overflow and the men from Snowy River in the poems of Banjo Paterson, and as well as the white shearers and shed hands painted by Tom Roberts, there must have been a good number of men — at least a thousand in south-eastern Australia each season — who were largely of Aboriginal descent. Because of our historians' fixation on grievance, we still know very little about those like them who assimilated comparatively easily and without any fuss. A proper history of Aboriginal assimilation has yet to be written. No one, however, should expect it to come from any of the current generation of academic historians, who are only interested in stories based on complaints of injustice.

The overwhelming majority of the children and teenagers who became what historians call the Stolen Generations came from that minority of Aborigines who lived on the reserves and stations. Of all the children in the Ward Registers discussed in Chapter Two, only 53 of them, or 8 per cent of those for whom reasons for separation were given, did not come from stations or reserves.[14] The 1909 Aborigines Protection Act, which established the apprenticeship system, specifically restricted the board's powers to full-blood Aborigines and those of lesser descent who lived on the board's stations and reserves, or 'who applied for or is in receipt of rations or aid from the board or is residing on a reserve'. The government agreed with the Labor member for Yass, Niels Nielsen, who said he 'wanted to be quite sure that aborigines, or descendants of aborigines, who elected to lead the life of white men, and go out working for their living, should be quite independent of the control of the board'.[15]

[14] These 53 were those transferred to the Aborigines Protection Board from the State Children's Relief Board: see Chapter Two, Table 2.5

[15] Aboriginal Protection Bill, *New South Wales Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly, 15 December 1909, p 4542

In 1884 the board provided rations to 741 adults and children, or to only 9 per cent of the colony's Aborigines. By 1890, when its distribution system was more firmly in place, it provided for 1324 people or 17 per cent of the population. That is, more than 80 per cent of the Aboriginal population remained economically independent throughout the 1880s. Even in the economic depression of the early 1890s, which dramatically reduced employment throughout the pastoral industry, more than 75 per cent of the colony's Aborigines still remained independent of government handouts.[16] It should be noted, however, that the proportion of Aborigines who actually lived on the stations was probably about ten percentage points higher each year than those who were dependent on government handouts. This was because a number of men were either employed on the stations themselves or had jobs in the local district and lived with their families on the stations without receiving rations or other aid for themselves. Even when the figures are supplemented by these men, the proportion of the state's Aborigines living on stations and reserves always remained a minority.

In the 1910s and 1920s, the number receiving rations remained at less than 2000 a year or about 25 per cent of the population. The only exception was in 1920–21 when a short economic downturn led some 2582 Aborigines, or 35 per cent of the state population, to apply for and receive aid in one twelve month period. This recession pushed the non-indigenous unemployment rate up to 12 per cent. The Aboriginal rate of dependency was worse than that of white employees partly because they were concentrated in the unskilled segment of the workforce and partly because the state government decided that unemployed Aborigines were ineligible for normal public relief work because they could always gain rations if they applied at a reserve or managed station.

By the late-1920s, the population of Aborigines in New South Wales of about 8500 adults and children could be roughly divided into four groups. Of the following categories, the second and third constituted what both contemporary records and historians call 'camps' and 'camp life', although the first group of stations and missions was often described in these terms too:

- About 1500 lived on government stations, which were small villages with government-provided rations, housing and schools. Because some of their managers were people with a Christian

[16] The first page of each of the board's annual reports in this period recorded total population figures plus the number receiving rations. Appendix B in each annual report gave a detailed breakdown of those receiving rations in each district and the amount spent. Figures quoted here are from reports for 1883–84, 1890, 1893, 1894

missionary background, several of these stations were popularly, though inaccurately, known as 'missions'. Most of their inhabitants were welfare dependants but they also included adult men who took up seasonal work around the state while their wives and children stayed behind.

- Another 1000 lived on authorized reserves, which were camping sites and rations depots for (i) people who moved about the state following seasonal work in the farming, fruit growing and pastoral industries, and (ii) old and disabled people, single mothers and their children who became permanent settlers living in tents, huts and sheds constructed by the Aborigines Protection Board. The government stations and authorized reserves provided the great majority of the children who became wards of the board.
- About 1000 were itinerants with no permanent home who also followed seasonal employment around the state's rural areas. They moved on and off authorized reserves at various times but mostly lived for short periods on unauthorized camping sites. For the most part they subsisted without government support but if enough of them congregated on one particular site for long enough to draw attention, the Aborigines Protection Board usually designated the site a reserve and provided it with rations. Very few children from this group became wards of the board since most escaped official notice.
- The remaining 5000 Aborigines were regularly employed and lived independently of the state, either in accommodation provided by employers or in houses of their own. The great majority lived in rural New South Wales engaged in the farming, pastoral, dairying, sugar and fishing industries. A noticeable number of them, especially on the east coast, were self-supporting farmers and commercial fishermen. Very few children from this group became wards of the board.[17]

In the 1930s, the board did not publish figures every year for the number of individuals it assisted but, given that white unemployment remained above 10 per cent from 1930 to 1935, hitting a peak of 29 per cent in 1932, its effects would clearly have been worse for Aborigines in each of these years. By 1938, the text of the board's annual report claimed that two-thirds of the state's Aborigines were living on

[17] The statistics in this dot-point summary are my own estimates based on a reading of the censuses in the annual reports of the Aborigines Protection Board from 1882 onwards. They are offered as a rough guide only, and are aimed more at categorizing the occupational and residential status of the various members of the state's Aboriginal population than defining precise numbers.

its stations and reserves. However, the statistics it published at the same time showed the actual situation was that, of the state's 10,938 Aborigines, 3550 lived on reserves, 1451 lived on stations, and the remaining 5937 were independent of the board. That is, the state's welfare dependent Aborigines amounted to 46 per cent of the Aboriginal population. While this clearly signaled that Aborigines suffered proportionately greater disadvantage during the Depression than the non-indigenous population, it also meant that even in these hard times, only a minority of Aborigines relied on welfare.[18] The employment opportunities provided by the Second World War changed all this and eventually reduced the dependency rate among New South Wales Aborigines back below 20 per cent of their population.

THE EXTENT OF GOVERNMENT FUNDING IN NEW SOUTH WALES

> Events in Australia did not culminate in the horrors of the mass extermination camps of Nazi Germany during the years of the Second World War. However, Aboriginal people in Australia's refugee camps and gulags faced for a far longer period the daily reality of starvation, disease, chronic ill health and often early death.
>
> — Anna Haebich, 2001[19]

Academic historians today blame many of the problems in Aboriginal settlements on the parsimony of government funding which, in turn, purportedly derived from a desire to be rid of them. Some historians paint a depressing picture of the stations and reserves in order to persuade their readers to compare them to the concentration camps and refugee camps of Eastern Europe in the 1930s and 1940s. As the quotation above demonstrates, Anna Haebich equated government-funded Aboriginal settlements in Australia with the gulags of the USSR, the death camps where the victims of Stalin died from overwork, cold and starvation.

Most historians of New South Wales have not openly used descriptions as dismal as this, but their readers get much the same drift. These authors have focused particularly on the 1930s, the decade they claim was the most hostile to the Aboriginal presence. Heather Goodall, Andrew Markus and Bain Attwood have all alleged that the New South Wales government slashed Aboriginal expenditures heavily during the 1930s.[20] Goodall blames the Aborigines

[18] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1937–38*, p 1; *Report, 1938–39*, p 2

[19] Anna Haebich, '"Between Knowing and Not Knowing": Public Knowledge of the Stolen Generations', *Aboriginal History*, 25, 2001, p 76

[20] Heather Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1770–1972*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1996, pp 193–4; Andrew Marcus, 'Under the Act', in Bill Gammage and Petert Spearritt, eds, *Austral-*

Protection Board's preoccupation with removing children from its settlements for its failure to properly care for its charges during the worst Depression years. She asserts:

> Aboriginal people faced intolerably crowded and insanitary conditions on the reserves and stations, because between 1930 and 1936 the Board simply had no funds to build emergency accommodation or to improve the water supplies or other infrastructure; this had fallen into neglect over previous decades when it had expected that all the Aboriginal residents would be finally 'dispersed'.[21]

None of this is true, either before, during or after the Great Depression. One thing beyond question is the direction taken by the funding. Even in years when the New South Wales government's general revenues plummeted, its spending on Aborigines went up. In the first four years of the Depression from 1930 to 1933, annual state grants to Aborigines rose from £37,746 to £57,271, a growth of 52 per cent. In the decade of the 1930s the only year government funding declined was 1934 when the budget was down by a mere 5.6 per cent to £54,082. By 1939, the total annual expenditure of £89,169 represented an increase of 136 per cent on the figure at the start of the decade.[22] This was a real increase too, since inflation during the 1930s was virtually non-existent.

In 1932, the worst year of the Depression, the state government responded to unemployment among Aboriginal rural workers and apprentices, and their consequent influx onto the reserves, by increasing its total expenditure on Aborigines by no less than 40 per cent. That year, the board believed the 'large majority' of those previously in the workforce had lost their jobs, and it responded accordingly:

> To meet the situation and to assist the able bodied men to maintain their self-respect, the Board has, in return for rations and other assistance, provided employment on its Reserves, and a good deal of such work as fen-

ians, 1938, Fairfax, Syme and Weldon Associates, Sydney, 1987, p 51; Bain Attwood, Winifred Burrage, Alan Burrage and Elsie Stokie, *A Life Together, a Life Apart: A History of Relations Between Europeans and Aborigines*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1994, pp 9–10

[21] Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, pp 193–4

[22] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1939*, p 7, has expenditure figures from 1930 to 1939. These are government expenditures on Aborigines from all departments, including Aborigines Protection Board, Department of Education, Government Stores Department, Director-General of Public Health, Department of Works, Department of Family Endowment and others.

cing, road making, formation of gardens, drainage, etc, has been carried out.[23]

Goodall supported her allegation that between 1930 and 1936 the board lacked funds for accommodation, water supplies or other infrastructure with a footnote reference to nothing but her own unpublished writings. The reality was quite different. In these years, the board's records reveal it drew on both its own budget and from funds of the Unemployment Relief Council to undertake a substantial program of building and infrastructure development on its stations and reserves. By 1934 it had:

- constructed 46 new buildings on ten stations and reserves;
- made repairs and additions to buildings on seven other reserves;
- constructed workshops, storerooms and milking sheds at several centres;
- built two recreation halls at Taree and Toomelah;
- moved a group of Aborigines camped near the town water supply at Yass to a new site where it contracted for the construction of sixteen new buildings and a school, the connection of a water supply, and fencing;
- moved the entire population of the Aboriginal station at Carowra Tank near Mossgiel, whose water supply was failing, to Menindee where it constructed housing for 200 people, a residence for the teacher-manager, a school, tool sheds, storerooms and a pumping plant.[24]

The board also used unemployment relief money to improve its La Perouse reserve in Sydney, giving it new buildings specially designed by the Government Architect, trees and shrubs planted by the Botanic Gardens, a water supply to each dwelling, and sewerage for the whole area. Indeed, the Government Tourist Bureau thought so highly of refurbished La Perouse it listed it with Bondi Beach among Sydney's recommended visiting spots for overseas tourists.[25]

Outside the government stations and reserves, however, life in these years was often grim for Aborigines. Many inhabited unauthorized camps that sprang up on stock routes and the fringes of the larger country towns, especially Armidale, Moree and Lismore.[26] They had no sanitary facilities and their dwellings were nothing but shelters made of bagging, old petrol tins and bark. The board sought legislative authority to close these camps and move their inhabitants onto its reserves 'where they, and particularly the women and chil-

[23] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1931–32*, p 2
[24] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1933–34*, pp 1–2
[25] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1930–31*, pp 1–2
[26] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1934–35*, p 1

dren, will be housed, and encouraged to live, under better moral and physical conditions'.[27] An amendment to the Act in 1936 allowed it to do this, but not under its own authority. It first had to apply for a court order and justify its actions to a magistrate. By this time, however, the worst of the economic and housing crises had passed.

As part of their determination to compare Australia to fascist Europe, academic historians today dramatize the 1936 Act as a tyranny that confined Aboriginal people against their will. Heather Goodall calls it 'the Dog Act' because Aborigines 'now could be penned up and shifted around just like animals'. She claims, quite against the evidence, that the amendment was targeted not at unauthorized camps but at the populations on the Aborigines Protection Board's own stations.[28] In practice, the new law was largely redundant even before it came into force, because by 1936 rural employment was returning to pre-Depression levels and the unauthorized camp dwellers were abandoning their makeshift settlements of their own accord, either for jobs on pastoral stations or for accommodation on the board's stations.[29] By this time, many of the remainder of these camps had become sites of government unemployment relief projects and by law could not be touched. So, even armed with the 1936 amendment, the board found it lacked the ability to close them or to persuade their inhabitants to move.

> These camps are not under the jurisdiction of the Board, and are often situated on private land or council reserves. The Board, from time to time, has attempted to remove the people to Stations or Reserves, but the aborigines, in most instances, steadfastly refuse to remove, preferring to remain where they are handy to the town for employment and where they may participate in the amenities of town life.[30]

In 1940, a Public Service Board inquiry into the management of Aboriginal affairs found this and other regulations the board had acquired were either unnecessary or superfluous: 'Many of the powers conferred on the Board have not been used to any extent, if at all.'[31]

For most of its existence, the board strove to provide Aboriginal welfare equal to that given to white people. Managed stations had provided free housing since the 1880s. There were times when the board was unabashed about its achievements. The annual report for 1926–27 boasted:

[27] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1932–33*, p 2
[28] Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, p 193
[29] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1934–35*, p 1
[30] Aborigines protection Board, *Report, 1938–39*, p 4
[31] *Aborigines Protection: Report and Recommendations of the Public Service Board of New South Wales*, Government Printer, Sydney, April 1940, p 10

> For several years past the Board has adopted a policy of general improvement of the living conditions on its reserves, and can now point to such places as Cumeroogunga, Brungle, Walhallow, Wallaga Lake, Cabbage Tree Island, Cowra, Pilliga, Angledool, and many others where the residents are living under conditions equal to and in some cases superior to those existing in some white settlements.[32]

By the mid-1920s, the majority of Aboriginal stations in rural New South Wales had reticulated water supplies, telephones, garbage collection and sanitation services,[33] amenities that many country towns and even some Sydney suburbs did not get until the 1960s. At Cumeroogunga in 1937, the assistant manager observed:

> all the houses had European furniture. Some of them had dining room suites. I can recall two houses that were as well furnished, or better furnished, than the houses of many white working men. Every second or third house had a wireless set, some of which had cost up to 29 guineas.[34]

It is true that in the 1930s population growth and the sudden influx of outsiders meant that on some stations many houses became overcrowded and in need of repair. Some were so old they had become ramshackle and decrepit. On some reserves, newcomers seeking refuge from the Depression built shelters for themselves that were 'nothing more than hovels made from old leaky flattened iron and rough bush timber'.[35] Aboriginal housing was one area where government funding, although boosted from £1400 in 1930 to £16,100 in 1939, remained inadequate throughout that decade.[36]

In other fields, however, welfare for Aborigines really was comparable to that provided for white people. On the stations in New South Wales, Aborigines were given a regular issue of winter and summer clothing, baby outfits, blankets, food rations, tobacco, free medical attention, and some limited dental treatment. Government welfare payments for Aborigines at the time included widows' pensions, family endowment, maternity allowances, plus old age and invalid pensions for those who had a substantial history of employment. In the late 1930s, an inquiry by the Public Service Board found the food rations nutritionally deficient. But the government imme-

[32] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1926–27*, p 1

[33] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1926–27*, p 1

[34] Gordon Milne, Minutes of evidence, *Select Committee on Administration of Aborigines Protection Board*, New South Wales Legislative Assembly, 24 November 1937, p 92

[35] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1938–39*, p 5, reporting the findings of a survey of housing by the newly appointed Superintendent of Aborigines Welfare

[36] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1938–39*, p 5

diately accepted a Department of Public Health recommendation for additional funding to provide more meat, milk and cereals. 'The result today,' the inquiry concluded in 1940, 'is that the ration scale is, for practical purposes, about equivalent to that provided for the general community under the jurisdiction of the Department of Social Services.'[37]

CAMP CULTURE AND ABORIGINAL CULTURE

According to Peter Read, the Aboriginal stations and reserves represented viable cultural choices, freely entered into by Aboriginal people, who preferred them to the town and suburban lifestyles of white people. He writes as if the way of life of the people in these locations *was* Aboriginal culture. Read says the white officials should have recognized the value of this culture and should have respected Aboriginal wishes to live in their own way. White people, however, were too blinded by prejudice to see:

> The whites were so convinced of the rightness of their own way of life that they excluded all the others. So deep was the idea of the *worthlessness* of Aboriginal society in New South Wales that hardly anybody, from the highest level of administration to the lowest, got past the old irrelevancies that they respected or were friendly with certain Aborigines. What was required was an appreciation of Aboriginal lifeways *in their own right*, not as lived by particular individuals. Most of the officials did not arrive at the starting point, that is, the recognition of the existence of New South Wales Aboriginal culture, let alone take the second step, which was to acknowledge its validity.[38]

The Link-Up submission to the Human Rights Commission's 1996–97 inquiry took this case one step further. It argued that in seeking to close down the reserves and stations, it sought to eliminate Aborigines as a distinct people. 'The aim of the Aborigines Protection/Welfare Board (APB, AWB or Board), enabled by the New South Wales legislature, was genocide: according to official records it sought the elimination of our people as a people from New South Wales.'[39] Link-Up made the same accusation against laws passed by

[37] *Aborigines Protection: Report and Recommendations of the Public Service Board*, pp 13–14

[38] Peter Read, *The Stolen Generations: The Removal of Aboriginal Children in New South Wales 1883 to 1969*, NSW Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, Sydney, Occasional Paper No 1, Sydney, 1981, p 20 (emphases in original)

[39] Link-Up (NSW) and Tikka Jan Wilson, *In the Best Interest of the Child? Stolen Children: Aboriginal Pain/White Shame*, Aboriginal History Monograph 4, Australian National University, Canberra, 1997, p 32. This book is a revised version of the Link-Up submission to the Human Rights Commission 1996–7 inquiry into stolen children.

the New South Wales government in 1915: 'These lawmakers aimed towards a vision of the future when "there will be no occasion for these camps or reserves", because there would be no Aboriginal population as a culturally distinct group.'[40] This organization's submission, largely researched and written by Read, also reproduced part of a New South Wales parliamentary debate in 1912 which quoted from a deputation to the Chief Secretary by the Aborigines Protection Board. The deputation said: 'The whole object of the board was to put things into train on lines that would eventually lead to the camps being depleted of their population, and finally the closing of the reserves and camps altogether.' Link-Up interpreted this as a blueprint for genocide:

> Understanding the word 'camp' is crucial here. The word really referred to groups of Aboriginals living together. It referred to our extended families where young and old shared their lives and where the older people taught the younger ones their culture and their heritage. It referred to our communities where we lived as a people differently from the way the European invaders lived. It was our integrity as a separate and distinct people which was symbolized by the 'camps' and which the Board sought to 'deplete of population' and 'close altogether'.[41]

This is not true. The camps, or stations and reserves, did not represent or symbolize or in any other way encompass the Aboriginal people in their entirety. They housed a distinct minority of welfare dependent people. The board and the members of the New South Wales parliament were well aware that the camps only ever housed that minority. Every year, their annual reports published figures which clearly distinguished between those living in these places and the majority of the Aboriginal population. The board's desire to close down the stations and camps never meant dispersing *all* the Aboriginal people or putting any end to Aborigines as 'a separate and distinct people'. Instead, it wanted to stop funding a culture which, despite the board's best efforts to suppress it, had emerged on its own reserves and stations. The board regarded this culture as indolent, unhealthy, violent and immoral. Its policies did not target the majority of indigenous people who lived elsewhere. It confined its attention to the camp life it had created itself. Here is a selection of its statements on this issue between 1907 and 1924:

> 1907: One of the most important questions the Board have to face is that of a large number of half-caste and other children (some of whom are almost white) at the various stations and camps. Under present conditions, though much has been done for some of them as regards primary educa-

[40] Link-Up, *In the Best Interest of the Child?*, p 62
[41] Link-Up, *In the Best Interest of the Child?*, p 58

> tion, and also (on the Board's stations) training the girls for domestic duties, they are, to a large extent, growing up in idleness, and under the influence of ill-regulated parents.[42]
>
> 1910: For years past, it has been recognized that the various aborigines reserves throughout the state, — and indeed the Board's stations, — are far from being suitable places in which to bring up young children.[43]
>
> 1912: The whole object of the board was to put things into train on lines that would eventually lead to the camps being depleted of their population, and finally the closing of the reserves and camps altogether. The camps and reserves should be made to work out their own salvation and thus a continually increasing charge upon the state would disappear, and a grave scandal and responsibility on the Government cease. But this could never be achieved until the children were removed from the low surroundings of the camps, and placed in a position where they would be sought after for healthy occupations. In that way the children would be saved and the camps abolished. The taking of the children would, of course, be limited to the camps alone.[44]
>
> 1914: In referring to the camp life of these aboriginals I ought to say that the intention of the Aborigines Protection Board, as the Vice-President of the Executive Council has said, ever since it was established, was almost entirely to absorb these half-castes and quadroons into the general community. There is no reason why a half-caste or quadroon lad should be kept in a public institution in a state of tutelage when he ought to be working as an ordinary citizen in the community.[45]
>
> 1920–21: A continuation of this policy of disassociating the children from camp life must eventually solve the aboriginal problem.[46]

Orthodox historians quote statements like these as if the genocidal intention is clear and enough has been said. But, as the board saw it, the 'Aboriginal problem' it faced was not the Aboriginal people as a race but the distinct lifestyle produced on these camps.

Peter Read alleged the aim of the Aborigines Protection Board was to eliminate Aboriginal culture by preventing its transmission from

[42] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1907*, p 4

[43] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1910*, p 4

[44] Remarks by Robert Donaldson during deputation to Chief Secretary by members of the Aborigines Protection Board, May 1912, quoted by Fred Flowers MLC during second reading speech, Aborigines Protection Amendment Bill, *New South Wales Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Council, 24 November 1914, p 1353

[45] Edmund Fosbery MLC, chairman of the Aborigines Protection Board 1883–1903, in second reading speech, Aborigines Protection Amendment Bill, *New South Wales Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Council, 24 November 1914, p 1355

[46] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1920–21*, p 5

one generation to the next, by 'the separation of the teaching generation from the learning generation'.[47] In the Link-Up submission, he writes: 'The board sought to take children as young as possible in order to cut the intergenerational bonds that reproduced Aboriginal culture and communities.'[48] However, neither the board nor anyone else at the time thought they were dealing with a version of traditional Aboriginal culture and religion. That all belonged to the distant past.

By the 1900s traditional tribal law, ceremonies and rituals were no longer preserved in the Aboriginal communities of New South Wales. The few cultural beliefs and practices remembered by Aboriginal elders were not passed on to the younger generation.

Rather than engaging in some conspiracy to eliminate traditional culture, the Aborigines Protection Board was anxious to preserve any remnants it could find. In 1893, when reports came in of a group of 30 Aborigines designated the 'last wild tribe' of New South Wales located in the south-west corner of the colony near Lake Victoria, the board immediately set aside a reserve for its members. The same year, when 98 Aborigines attended a 'bora' or traditional initiation ceremony for boys near Warren, and the Barwon River tribes gathered for similar rites at Goondabluie on the Queensland border, the board sent rations for the aged men, women and children.[49] In 1894, the Goondabluie bora ceremony was repeated, only this time it attracted 203 Aborigines for the initiation of 20 youths. The board again sent rations while the ceremonies were underway.[50] However, this was the last mention in the board's reports of the practice of the ceremonies of traditional culture. In 1904, the manager of Brungle Aboriginal station reported:

> During the year the old King (John Nelson) died. It is sad that very little notice was taken of his decease, and that the old customs of the race are fast disappearing, the habits and customs of the white people taking their place.[51]

By this time, the only people seriously interested in traditional culture were white anthropologists. For his major work published in 1904, *The Native Tribes of South-east Australia*, Alfred William Howitt collected and recorded the last vestiges of traditional culture in visits

[47] Peter Read, 'Introduction' to Coral Edwards and Peter Read, eds, *The Lost Children: Thirteen Australians Taken From Their Aboriginal Families Tell of the Struggle to Find Their Natural Parents*, Doubleday, Sydney, 1989, p xiii
[48] Link-Up, *In the Best Interest of the Child?*, p 56
[49] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1893*, p 3
[50] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1894*, p 3
[51] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1904*, p 7

he made to missions and stations before 1889. 'Since then,' he wrote, 'the native tribes have more or less died, and in the older settlements of South-East Australia the tribal remnants have now almost lost the knowledge of the beliefs and customs of their fathers.'[52]

Instead, the Aborigines in the camps inhabited something quite different. At best, it was a combination of old family loyalties and the missionary ideal of small, patriarchal religious communities governed by a daily timetable decreeing the hours for meals, work, school and religious worship.[53] At worst, it was a violent, chaotic, binge-drinking, sexually promiscuous, heavy-gambling lifestyle little different to the worst remote communities in central and northern Australia today,

One way to examine the culture of these camps is through the perceptions of the Aborigines Protection Board. This approach is obviously limited, since it omits the perspective of the Aborigines, but it is nonetheless imperative if we are to understand why the board acted as it did. By the early 1900s, the board had come to the conclusion that, even though it was originally responsible for creating these camps by providing the sites and the rations that drew people to them, the predominance of low-life culture meant most of them were now unfit for children to grow up in. Their three most serious problems were alcoholism, indolence and sexual abuse.

INTEMPERANCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

> The supply of intoxicating drinks to the aborigines is the fruitful source of nearly all the evils and misery to which the poor creatures are subject.
>
> — George Thornton, Protector of Aborigines, New South Wales, 1882[54]

The first Protector of Aborigines in New South Wales, George Thornton, believed alcoholism, or 'intemperance' as he and his peers called it, was the greatest misfortune white society had inflicted on the Aborigines. It was the underlying cause of the offensive behaviour at the Circular Quay boatsheds during his term of office, and, because it unleashed violence, sexual abuse and disease, he thought it the main reason for the decline of the full-blood population. In his first census

[52] A. W. Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, (1904), facsimile edition, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1996, p xiii

[53] Bain Attwood, *The Making of the Aborigines*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1989, pp 7–25. The pretentious title of this book is out of all proportion to its content, which is largely limited to a study of the ethos prevailing at two nineteenth-century missions in Victoria, Ramahyuck and Lake Tyers, Gippsland.

[54] George Thornton, *Aborigines, Report of the Protector*, 14 August 1882, *Votes and Proceedings, Legislative Assembly of New South Wales*, 1882, Vol 4, p 1525

of 1882, Thornton asked the police to report on whether the Aborigines in their locality were 'addicted to habits of intemperance'. The returns showed this was a problem in 52 per cent of communities. Apart from the missions, which banned alcohol, many of the remaining communities were dry only because they could not get enough supply.[55]

In 1890, when the Aborigines Protection Board conducted its census for that year, it repeated the survey of intemperance. It asked each of the colony's 72 police districts to report on whether the local Aborigines were 'addicted to habits of intemperance', if so where they obtained their liquor, and to make suggestions for reducing consumption. The census found the proportion of the colony where the majority or all the Aborigines were addicted to alcohol had grown to 60 per cent; while the proportion where the majority were 'of temperate habits' had fallen to 40 per cent. By this time, the formerly dry missions had succumbed. The local police recorded that most Aborigines in all three districts where Christian missions were located, Moama (Cumeroogunga), Darlington Point (Warangesda) and Brewarrina, were addicted to alcohol. Here is a sample of returns from all districts:

> Tweed River District, Aboriginal population 120: All are addicted to habits of intemperance. The liquor, as a rule, is supplied at night by Europeans of low character and kanakas. The camps have been frequently watched by the police, but so far without success.
>
> Richmond River District, Aboriginal population 524: The majority are addicted to habits of intemperance, but there are a few who do not drink. The liquor is stealthily obtained at public-houses, and from some of the townspeople for whom they do odd jobs. Every attempt is made by the police to check the practice, but great difficulty is experienced in obtaining information to prosecute.
>
> Clarence River District, Aboriginal population 415: The majority are addicted to habits of intemperance. A number of convictions have been obtained against publicans for supplying them with liquor.
>
> Tenterfield District, Aboriginal population 102: The majority are temperate.
>
> Bellinger River District, Aboriginal population 57: Many are addicted to habits of intemperance, the liquor being supplied by the persons who employ them, and by Europeans who visit their camps.
>
> Nambucca River District, Aboriginal population 114: The majority of the full-blood aborigines are addicted to habits of intemperance. The liquor is

[55] *Aborigines, Report of the Protector*, 14 August 1882, pp 1–2, 10–27

generally obtained from Europeans. Many of the half-castes are sober and industrious.

Manning River District, Aboriginal population 107: They are all, as a rule, fond of drink. The liquor is generally obtained by half-castes and from Europeans who visit the camps. Two persons were prosecuted during the year by the Taree police for supplying rum to the aborigines and were sentenced to 14 days imprisonment each.

Hawkesbury River District, Aboriginal population 79: They are not addicted to habits of intemperance. On the contrary, they are very temperate.

Shoalhaven District, Aboriginal population 133: The majority love drink, which is generally secretly supplied to them by Europeans. The aborigines resort to all kinds of artifice to obtain liquor.

Wallaga Lake District, Aboriginal population 99: Very few complaints are made of their drinking habits. Generally speaking, they are much improved in this respect.

Warren District, Aboriginal population 105: The majority drink whenever they can obtain the liquor, which is, as a rule, supplied by Europeans who visit the camps for immoral purposes.

Bathurst District, Aboriginal population 32: Only 2 of the aborigines, both full-blood, are of intemperate habits, the liquor being obtained in town. The remainder are hardworking and industrious.

Cowra District, Aboriginal population 70: None are addicted to habits of intemperance.

Brewarrina District (Brewarrina mission), Aboriginal population 163: A large number are addicted to habits of intemperance.

Barringun District, Aboriginal population 109: The majority are addicted to habits of intemperance and opium smoking. The liquor is supplied them by Europeans. In many instances it is purchased direct from the hotels, notwithstanding the vigilance of the police in their efforts to prevent it. The opium is supplied to them by the Chinese, and they are much fonder of it than the liquor.

Mossgiel District, Aboriginal population 98: The aborigines in this district are very temperate

Darlington Point District (Warangesda mission), Aboriginal population 141: They are very much given to habits of intemperance. The liquor is supplied to them by station hands and others.

Deniliquin District, Aboriginal population 74: They all drink when they get the opportunity, the liquor, as a rule, being obtained from station hands during the shearing season.

> Moama District (Cumeroogunga mission), Aboriginal population 189: The majority are addicted to habits of intemperance. The liquor is generally obtained at Echuca and Bamah (Victoria).[56]

There was no discernible pattern to these findings. Drunken and temperate Aboriginal communities could be found in all geographic regions of the colony and neither the presence nor absence of Christian missions appeared to make much difference either way to the outcome.

Alcoholism blighted Aboriginal life for the entire existence of the Aborigines Protection Board. From the outset, it crushed the hopes of missionaries and government officials alike for an orderly transition from traditional hunter-gatherer life to the modern world. It consumed individuals, causing even men who earned 'considerable sums of money' working for pastoralists and selectors to ignore their obligations to their wives and children:

> Unfortunately at present they are frequently led to go into the townships nearest the stations and spend their money in drink, and thus their wives and children are thrown upon the station for support.[57]

Alcohol led women away from their communities in the 1880s:

> These miserable women are so degraded by drink and other vice that it is difficult for us to reach them.[58]

> Although Maloga is in an isolated position, and free from intrusions of the public, both by distance from town, and being situated in a large bend of the Murray River, still we are not entirely cut off from temptation in the form of strong drink. Two or three of the elder women walked to a public house some few miles away, and slyly obtained spirits.[59]

The same community was still afflicted by the problem in the 1930s:

> There was a little settlement across the river and an aboriginal could go over and drink liquor with the white people. That was over the Victorian border, and the aborigines could go over the border and drink as much as they liked, and then come across and create trouble. It was considered the

[56] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1890*, pp 3–15. Results of a further census, which included the same questions about intemperance, were published in the 1891 report, pp 4–19, but the results were virtually identical to 1890.

[57] Aborigines Protection Association, *Our Black Brethren: Their Past, Present and Future*, Annual Report, Sydney, 1892, p 8

[58] Daniel Matthews, *Fourth Report of the Maloga Aboriginal Mission School, Murray River, New South Wales*, Echuca, 1879, pp 7, 20

[59] Daniel Matthews, *Ninth Report of the Maloga Aboriginal Mission School, Murray River, New South Wales*, Echuca, 1884, p 14

> ruin of many of the aborigines. A considerable sum of money has gone across that river to the hotel.[60]

The violence it engendered sometimes became a public issue that prompted commentary in the parliament:

> [At Cumeroogunga] these men were frequently intoxicated. On one occasion they became a mob of howling savages, and surrounded the manager's residence, and shots were fired.[61]

All those concerned saw alcohol as a major cause of death and depopulation:

> The twin evils — intemperance and sexual immorality — are carrying off large numbers year by year.[62]

> The board note with regret that a large proportion of the deaths has arisen from the effects of intemperance, and much difficulty is experienced in preventing ill-advised persons from supplying the aborigines with intoxicants.[63]

Alcoholism and the violence and abuse it engendered to children was one of the contributing reasons for the high incidence of Aboriginal children being defined as neglected. One former inmate of the Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls' Home recalled:

> I know why I came. My father took off and my mother drank and they apparently found me in the house by myself. This Welfare woman told me that and that I was bruised and that. I don't want to remember that — if it's true. I don't want my kids to know my family was like that. I think it was true — I remember being belted with the buckled end of a belt and I've got a scar from that, I think.[64]

The only effective response the authorities came up with was prosecution by the police and the law. Throughout the 1890s and 1900s, police regularly recorded convictions of a variety of people, including publicans, half-castes and Assyrian hawkers, for supplying alcohol to the Aborigines. Some publicans lost their licences for the offence.

[60] J. G. Danvers, Minutes of evidence, *Select Committee on Administration of Aborigines Protection Board*, New South Wales Legislative Assembly, 16 December 1937, p 101, discussing Cumeroogunga station, formerly Maloga station

[61] Peters, MLA (Member for Deniliquin), *New South Wales Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly, 15 December 1909, p 4547

[62] New South Wales Aborigines Protection Association, *Annual Report for 1894*, Sydney, 1895, p 8

[63] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1896*, p 3

[64] Recorded in Merryl-Leigh Brindley, The Home on the Hill: The Story Behind the Cootamundra Girls' Home, MA (Aboriginal Studies) thesis, University of South Australia, 1994, p 182

The stations most successful at resisting the problem were those that were both isolated from town life and had a vigilant local police force. The manager of the Euraba reserve near Boomi on the Queensland border reported in 1911:

> This Reserve is geographically well adapted for a home for aborigines, as, owing to its isolation from the town, with its accompanying evil influences and facilities for obtaining drink, the residents are spared the necessity of combating these temptations, and are consequently a sober, well-behaved, hard-working lot of blacks. In this connection, too, the unwavering interest displayed by the local police in the conditions of these people has largely contributed to their present happy state.[65]

The 1909 Aborigines Protection Act extended the existing full-blood prohibition to those of part descent who lived on an Aboriginal reserve or who received the board's rations.[66] However, this made little impact on the deeply embedded drinking culture on the stations and camps. The authorities never got the problem under control. The powerful temperance movement that arose at the time within the chapels and churches of white working class communities made no headway among the Aborigines.

By the 1930s, all the problems of the 1880s and 1890s had multiplied, with the sole exception of opium smoking. In New South Wales, this addiction never became the problem it was in Queensland, where one of the motives for creating that state's system of Aboriginal reserves in 1897 was to prevent opium consumption.[67] The New South Wales census report (above) from the Barringun district in 1890 about local opium consumption was repeated in 1892, but not thereafter. The only other reported incident of opium use was in 1901 when a Chinese man was convicted for selling it to the Aborigines at Bourke. In 1937, the former manager of the Brewarrina Aboriginal station, Roderick Brain, was questioned by a select committee of the New South Wales parliament inquiring into the management of the Aboriginal stations:

> Did you ever see any drugs about there? — No.
>
> Or any opium or anything like that used? — No, metho at times but not opium.

[65] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1911*, p 16

[66] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1910*, p 3

[67] Hence in 1897 the Queensland parliament produced An Act to make Provisions for the Better Protection and care of the Aboriginal and Half-Caste Inhabitants of the Colony, and to make more effectual Provision for Restricting the Sale and Distribution of Opium.

> Who would bring the metho. there? — The aborigines themselves. They got it from the chemist, but the chemist actually did not know what they were getting it for.[68]

Alcohol always remained the Aborigines' preferred path to intoxication. As long as the 1909 act and its amendments remained in force, the supply of alcohol to stations and reserves remained surreptitious, but still flowed freely enough to wreak its consequences of violence, sexual abuse and of men far too hung over to even think about going to work. If the grog supply did dry up, alternatives such as metho (methylated spirits or 100 per cent wood alcohol) were still available. When a new amendment to the Aborigines Protection Act came before the New South Wales parliament in 1936, some politicians responded to the Aborigines' acquired taste for this lethal substance by calling for methylated spirits to be added to the definition of prohibited 'liquor'.[69]

INDOLENCE AND THE WELFARE DILEMMA

> The indisposition of the aborigines to manual labour is well known; but as they can obtain work of various kinds in the country they should not only be induced to take it, but they should be discouraged from remaining in comparative idleness at mission stations, where they will certainly abide as long as they are provided with food and clothing, without some corresponding demand being made upon their labour.
>
> — Phillip Gidley King and Edmund Fosbery, report on missions to Aborigines, 1882[70]

The founding of the Aborigines Protection Board was one small part of a more general tendency of the era, the growth of state intervention in the economy and in the lives of citizens. In New South Wales, from the end of the convict era in 1838 until the economic depression of the 1890s, politicians who supported free trade either held office themselves or exerted most influence in the ruling ideas of the times. The crash of the 1890s was a severe blow to private confidence and so the advocates of state action came to the fore in a number of fields, in particular social welfare. At the time, private and church-funded philanthropy found it difficult to raise funds and

[68] Minutes of evidence, *Select Committee on Administration of Aborigines Protection Board*, New South Wales Legislative Assembly, 24 November 1937, p 18

[69] Captain Chaffey and Mr O'Sullivan, *New South Wales Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly, 23 June 1936, p 4836

[70] *Aboriginal Mission Stations at Warangesda and Maloga*, Report and correspondence respecting inquiry into working of, *Votes and Proceedings, Legislative Council of New South Wales*, 1883

governments stepped in to run existing institutions or create new ones of their own. In Aboriginal affairs, the privately funded Aborigines Protection Association ran out of money for its missions at Cumeroogunga, Warangesda and Brewarrina in the early 1890s. The government rescued all three institutions and handed them over to its Aborigines Protection Board. They provided the operational model for what eventually grew to twenty Aboriginal stations.

The shift from private to government philanthropy in Aboriginal affairs, as well as other areas of social welfare, was accompanied by an ideological debate about the rights and responsibilities of welfare recipients and about the social consequences of giving people welfare handouts.[71] The debate lasted for more than a century and, indeed, is still with us today. After several decades of little government welfare, except an annual gift of blankets that went back to Governor Macquarie, the provision of rations to Aborigines in the 1880s raised a difficult question. The operating assumption at the time was that handouts should go only to those obviously in need — the old, the sick, the unemployed and deserted mothers. But many people began to question whether the provision of welfare itself actually increased the ranks of the needy. Did it not encourage the able-bodied to give up paid employment? Was there not a contradiction in the welfare system between giving handouts to the needy and making them self-reliant? These were questions asked of the welfare provided to both white and black recipients. What made it of greater concern in the case of Aborigines was that it was mostly asked not by armchair critics in the cities who were opposed to government handouts on principle, but by those out in the field and closest to the recipients themselves. From the 1880s onwards, the Aborigines Protection Board produced a steady stream of observations from managers, teachers and voluntarily committeemen who worked to keep the stations and larger reserves functioning and who all despaired in varying degrees about the lack of a work ethic among their able-bodied inhabitants.

From the outset, the missions had faced the problem of men refusing outside employment. They partly resolved it by requiring them to work for a living on the missions themselves, paying them in rations to clear land, plant crops, and do construction work and general maintenance.[72] Hence the missions were the originators of a policy that persists to this day, although it now goes under the name of

[71] Brian Dickey, *No Charity There: A Short History of Social Welfare in Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1997, Chapter Four

[72] *Black but Comely, being the Annual Report of the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Association for 1892*, p 7

'work-for-the-dole', or Community Development Employment Program, or some similar bureaucratic euphemism.

When the Aborigines Protection Board took over the mission stations it preserved the same policy regime. Before long, however, it ran out of patience with the number of men who remained disinclined to work. I recorded above the circular on this subject the board sent out in 1898 to all its officers. The problem nonetheless persisted. The board's officers continued to deny rations to the able-bodied who would not leave. However, they interpreted the board's circular charitably and allowed many to stay, offering them paid work on the station or providing them with rations in times of seasonal unemployment.

> 1899, Brewarrina: I may further add that I have cleared the place of about 6 able-bodied men, who seemed to prefer staying here for their rations rather than accept work elsewhere. I showed them from the circular issued that this was no place for them ... The men were away a good portion of the year, but they suckered 2250 acres, repaired some of the houses that were a little out of order, and made and hung eight pairs round wood gates leading into the different paddocks, which are eight in number.[73]

> 1904, Warangesda: In view of the instructions issued by the Central Board that able-bodied half-castes were not to be kept on the station, a number of men had their rations stopped and were told that they must seek work outside the station. As they were unable to obtain employment at the time they were allowed back on the station on promising to contribute towards the support of their families. During the shearing season most of the men were away from the station at work.[74]

> 1908, Wallaga Lake: In their annual report, the Local Board state that though they are not by any means satisfied with the progress made, still they do not attribute any blame to the manager, the simple reason being that the aborigines, with one or two exceptions, cannot be made to work, able-bodied men loafing on those who are provided by the Government with rations. To remedy this they suggest that a room should be erected in which to serve the meals of those entitled to rations, thus compelling the others to work or leave the station.[75]

The balance of evidence from reports like these did not mean that the local managers who wrote these reports, or the board officers who read them, thought that Aborigines as a race were inherently lazy. When employment was offering outside the stations most of the men invariably took up the offer. Rather, these reports illustrated the welfare dilemma: by providing handouts provided on stations and

[73] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1899*, p 18
[74] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1904*, p 10
[75] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1908*, p 12

reserves, they attracted to them those Aborigines disinclined to work. Those who gravitated to the stations and reserves were those who were most attracted to a culture of indolence. By their presence, many managers complained, they passed on the same attitude to other inhabitants, especially the young. By 1909, many station managers felt they were losing the battle. Here are some of their complaints from that year alone:

> Brungle: Work is plentiful in the district, and the men are more inclined to accept employment than formerly, though some young men on the station, who are almost white, will not work if they can possible avoid it. It is to be hoped, however, that these men will shortly be no longer residents of the station.
>
> Grafton: the manager reports that the old trouble of getting them to work is far from at an end. Many of them excuse themselves by saying they are not allowed the same rate of wages as Europeans. There is plenty of employment offering, and no able-bodied aborigines need be idle.
>
> Roseby Park: Of the twenty-five able-bodied men on the station, some half-dozen have been in constant work, and most of the others have been able to obtain fairly frequent employment; but a few worked only when absolutely necessary. The women have also been able to obtain employment at washing about the district, but the girls will not stay at a place long, and the residents of the locality are in consequence chary of engaging them.
>
> Runnymede: There is ample employment in the locality for the residents of the station, the population in the district having increased enormously. Some of the young men, however, value their work so highly that they want more wages than white men.
>
> Wallaga Lake: A number of able-bodied men continue to remain on the station, simply loafing on those who receive rations, and gambling, but it is hoped the place will soon be ridded of these men.
>
> Warangesda: The able-bodied are employed about the district shearing, fencing, harvesting, scrubbing etc, but there are still some men who will not work, and who linger on or about the station. When the Act and Regulations come into force, it will be possible to remedy this state of affairs.[76]

The last comment referred to the Aborigines Protection Bill that passed through the parliament that year. Because its existing deterrents proved ineffective, the board eventually sought a response in legislation. It wanted the legal authority to forcibly remove from its sites those who would not comply with its regulations about working for a living. If there was no seasonal employment in the district then

[76] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1909*, pp 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13

if the men wanted to stay they would have to earn their living working about the station itself. If they remained there and were idle, they set a bad example and created a precedent that had long-term cultural consequences. In the debate over the 1909 bill, board member Robert Donaldson assured the Legislative Assembly:

> The camps were overrun by men almost white, who defied the board, and they were a bad example for the children. They went shearing, spent all their money on gambling, came back to the camp, and lived on the rations of the old people and children. They would be kept out in the most drastic manner.[77]

Initially, the new legislation seemed to work. Station managers reported a marked improvement in their charges' work ethic:

> 1910, Brungle: The new Act has been responsible for the abolition of idling and laziness on the part of the able-bodied, and many of the men during the year have obtained work at neighbouring stations.[78]

> 1911, Edgerton (Yass): Previous to the installation of the Manager, the men on the station were in the habit of sending the women out to work, whilst they stopped at home, idle, which state of things has now been reversed, and proper discipline is now maintained.[79]

However, the problem never really went away. It persisted throughout the life of the board. In the late 1930s, its reports still recorded persistent complaints of this kind.

> At certain stations many aborigines experience little difficulty in this regard [employment], being well known in their own districts, where they enjoy a reputation for reliability. On the other hand, however, the Board experiences considerable difficulty with a certain type, not unknown in the white community, and which prefers to remain in idleness, so long as they are able to secure, from some source, sufficient food and other necessities of life.[80]

At various times in its history, the board talked tough about taking action against the indolent but it usually did very little. Historians have often truncated its words to convey the most sinister motives but have avoided discussing what actions followed. For instance, in 1920–21, the board said:

[77] Robert Donaldson (Member for Wynyard), *New South Wales Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly, 15 December 1909, p 4550
[78] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1910*, p 9
[79] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1911*, p 9
[80] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1938–39*, p 5

> The process of gradually eliminating quadroons and octoroons is being quietly carried on, care being taken that no hardship is inflicted, each case being treated on its merits.[81]

It hardly needs to be said that 'eliminating quadroons and octoroons' did not actually mean *eliminating* them — although, on second thoughts, given the way academic historians have exploited such statements, perhaps that does need saying. In context, it meant reducing the numbers of non-full-blood, able-bodied men who remained on reserves and lived on handouts. It also meant ensuring that those who were genuinely unemployed were not treated callously, that is, 'no hardship is inflicted'. The context for these remarks was the sharp economic downturn that year. A little further down the same page, the report said:

> Owing to the general unemployment throughout the State very many additional names were added to the Board's ration lists on the various Reserves and Stations; not only did the unemployed Aborigines themselves have to ask for assistance, but it also had to be extended to their wives and families. It is hoped, however, that such assistance will only be of a temporary nature, and that employment will again become normal in due course.[82]

In other words, to anyone reading this report at the time, the board's long-term aim was to reduce welfare dependency among able-bodied adults, but it was prepared to respond to adverse economic conditions by providing a welfare safety net for unemployed Aborigines, even if this meant taking a short-term backward step from its main objective. This was a properly flexible approach to policy making. In fact, when the state's economy revived soon after, the board saw its long-term strategy again in process of being fulfilled. In 1922–23 it observed:

> During recent years a considerable diminution of the numbers of Aborigines residing on Aboriginal Stations and Reserves has been noticeable, due, it appears, to the Aborigines desiring to be free of supervision and restrictions imposed upon them on Reserves where they have to comply with the rules and regulations. Many have learned to earn their own living and to be independent of Government assistance, which is a satisfactory result of the Board's policy, which encourages the Aborigines to, as far as possible, maintain themselves.

If anything, the board said, this was happening at too fast a pace, for in leaving the stations and reserves their inhabitants 'forfeited the benefits of good housing accommodation, regular supplies of food and clothing, and schooling for their children, to which they were

[81] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1920–21*, p 5
[82] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1920–21*, p 5

properly entitled'. The board even contemplated the need for legislation to give it the discretion to prohibit some from leaving. It recognized, though, that such power would amount to 'drastic action'.[83]

In other words, the board was torn between much the same emotions as parents of children approaching adulthood. It wanted to see its charges make their own way in the world by leaving home and becoming independent people. Yet at the same time it was reluctant to give up its own role as provider of home and comforts. This was a quandary it never satisfactorily resolved.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND VENEREAL DISEASE

In 1914 children attending the public school at Urunga on the New South Wales north coast suffered an outbreak of venereal disease. In March that year, three Aboriginal boys aged eight, ten and twelve, who lived at the local Aboriginal reserve on an island in the Bellinger River, were found to have gonorrhoea. They were examined and treated by the government medical officer at nearby Bellingen. Since they attended the local public school only erratically and had not been there for some months, the issue did not immediately become a concern in the white township. However, in June, two more boys aged six and eight were found to have contracted the same disease. News of the outbreak became public after the father of the latter two boys, who were part-Aboriginal but did not live at the reserve, told the local milkman that they had caught it from the school toilets, probably from the other Aboriginal pupils. The milkman spread the story to all his customers. The parents of white children at the school immediately withdrew most of them from classes and demanded that children from the Aboriginal reserve be banned. The school's teacher notified the Department of Education. It sent its principal medical officer to Urunga to examine the school's 45 white and black pupils. He examined all the white children but found none had the disease. Although he had requested the local police ensure that the three Aboriginal girls from the reserve who attended the school be present at the medical examination, he found they had fled the district.

There was no doubt the disease was gonorrhoea. The medical officer confirmed his visual diagnosis with bacteriological tests. Based on the known incubation period and the dates when the infected children showed symptoms, the doctor ruled out the school toilets as a cause of the outbreaks. At the time, it was commonly assumed that the venereal diseases such as gonorrhoea and syphilis could be spread by sitting on toilet seats previously used by those afflicted. Today, health authorities treat this belief as a myth. Except for gonococcal

[83] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1922–23*, p 2

ophthalmia, a disease spread to new-born babies during childbirth by mothers infected with gonorrhoea, venereal diseases are only transmitted by sexual activity.[84] Nonetheless, the white parents at Urunga at the time were convinced their children would catch the infection if they used the same toilets as the Aboriginal students. The principal medical officer reported to his superiors:

> The feeling against allowing Aboriginal children to attend the school appeared to be very acute. I was asked if this could not be stopped, or, short of that, could not these children be made to occupy a separate department of the school. I promised to place the matter before you on my return to Sydney.[85]

He recommended that all Aboriginal children from the island camp be excluded from school until further notice. The Department of Education agreed.[86]

[84] Sexually transmitted disease program, Los Angeles Public Health, 2008: www.lapublichealth.org/std/faq.htm

[85] Medical examination of school: Alec Longmuir, Public School Urunga, to Inspector of Schools Kempsey, 4 June 1914; Infectious disease: Alec Longmuir, Public School Urunga, to Inspector of Schools Kempsey, 5 June 1914; Reported epidemic amongst the Aborigines at Urunga: Constable J. McGrath, Police Station, Urunga, to Inspector General of Police, 12 June 1914; Urunga Public School, Alleged outbreak of venereal disease: C. S. Willis, principal medical officer, school medical service, to Under Secretary, Department of Education, 24 June 1914 — all in school files, Urunga, 5/17950.1, NSW State Archives, Kingswood. Jim Fletcher reports some but not all aspects of this case in his collection *Documents in the History of Aboriginal Education in New South Wales*, Fletcher, Sydney, 1989, pp 114–5. Fletcher presumed that the two boys infected in June, Arthur and Thomas Simmonds, were white. However, while their father James Simmonds was born in England, their mother was part-Aboriginal. Fletcher also gives the wrong location for these files. As noted above, they are at 5/17950.1.

[86] The eventual response of the Department of Education was not to insist the Aboriginal children return to the Urunga Public School. Instead it established an Aboriginal-only school on the local island reserve in 1916. When his part-aboriginal children were directed to attend this school, James Simmonds objected and insisted they attend a normal public school. When he tried to enrol them at nearby Nambucca Heads Public School in 1916 he was initially refused but, after his protests reached the Under Secretary of Education, they were finally admitted. Jim Fletcher's history of Aboriginal education in New South Wales attributes white parents' objections to the boys to racism but fails to mention that the parents knew the boys had previously suffered gonorrhoea: J. J. Fletcher, *Clean, Clad and Courteous: A History of Aboriginal Education in New South Wales*, J. Fletcher, Sydney, 1989, pp 116–17

After the initial outbreak in March 1914, the Urunga police traced the original source of the infection to an 18-year-old Aboriginal woman from Bowraville, Eden Collins, who was visiting the local Aboriginal reserve. She was arrested, brought before a court and sentenced to six months in Long Bay reformatory. The police report that survives in the Department of Education files does not say what precise offence she was charged with. Nonetheless, it appears clear that either a sexual partner or partners of Miss Collins at Urunga went on to have sex with the school children, or perhaps — given her conviction and prison sentence — she committed offences with the 8-, 10- and 12-year-old boys herself. Whatever the case, the fact that two other boys aged six and eight contracted the same disease three months later confirmed that child sexual abuse was prevalent among Aborigines in the district.

The evidence from Urunga was far from isolated or unknown elsewhere. Aboriginal settlements had always been known to harbour high rates of sexually transmitted disease. Children with these infections were observed as long ago as the 1880s. In his report for the Aborigines Protection Association in 1884, the missionary Daniel Matthews said of his community at Maloga:

> Several of the men and women too are afflicted with complaints which result from their former depraved lives. In some cases these diseases are transmitted to the children. It is painful to see what a wreck some of them are by reason of the contaminating influences of wicked men.[87]

When Edmund Fosbery and Phillip Gidley King visited the missions at Maloga and Warangesda in 1882 they despaired of the prevailing climate of sexual morality:

> some of the women are of depraved habits, and though hopes were expressed for their reformation, it is painfully obvious that they should not be the constant companions of the younger half-caste and quadroon girls to whom we have made reference.[88]

The following year, Fosbery took over as chairman of the Aborigines Protection Board. Although he did not write it in his report, he told his fellow board members 'of the lamentable condition in which he found the blacks — suffering from syphilis and other loathsome

[87] Matthews. *Ninth Report*, p 12

[88] *Aboriginal Mission Stations at Warangesda and Maloga: Report and Correspondence respecting Inquiry into and Working of*, P. G. King and E. Fosbery to the Colonial Secretary, 8 August, 1882, New South Wales Legislative Council, 1883, p 3, in *Votes and Proceedings of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly*, 1883

diseases'.[89] Fifty years later, the same diseases remained endemic. In evidence to the 1937 parliamentary select committee into the board's management, James Danvers said when appointed manager of the Cumeroogunga (formerly Maloga) station in 1934, he found the incidence of disease so great he immediately reported it to the board. 'I said there was tuberculosis there, and a certain amount of venereal disease, and that in some cases people had been allowed to marry while they were suffering from those diseases.' Before he transferred to Cumeroogunga, Danvers had been manager of the Brewarrina station, which he regarded as more protected from disease by its remoteness. He said: 'There was nothing like the amount of venereal disease and tuberculosis at Brewarrina that you would find at Cumeroogunga, which was much closer to the city.'[90] By late 1937, Cumeroogunga still harboured ten people suffering venereal disease, about 5 per cent of the population of the station.[91]

In 1936, an epidemic of sexually-transmitted disease broke out among children at the Angledool Aboriginal station north of Walgett, near the Queensland border. The majority of the cases were infections of the eye, gonococcal ophthalmia. However, there were other versions of these infections, which Ivy Pratt, the nurse who treated them, called 'general venereal disease cases'.[92] One of those discovered suffering from gonorrhoea was an 8-year-old girl. The wife of the Brewarrina station manager took her to Sydney for treatment. Two small boys suffering from an unidentified variety of venereal disease were transferred from Angledool to a coastal hospital.[93]

For a time, this outbreak alarmed the authorities. Four children with gonococcal ophthalmia lost the sight of at least one eye each. A local doctor who investigated Angledool found the situation so out of hand that he advised the government it should charter a plane to

[89] Scobie, member for Murray and Aborigines Protection Board member, *New South Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly, 27 January 1915, p 1964

[90] James Danvers, Minutes of evidence, *Select Committee on Administration of Aborigines Protection Board*, New South Wales Legislative Assembly, 15 December 1937, pp 73–8

[91] Ivy Pratt, Minutes of evidence, *Select Committee on Administration of Aborigines Protection Board*, New South Wales Legislative Assembly, 22 November 1937, p 3

[92] Ivy Pratt, Minutes of evidence, *Select Committee on Administration of Aborigines Protection Board*, New South Wales Legislative Assembly, 22 November 1937, p 3

[93] Roderick Brain, Minutes of evidence, *Select Committee on Administration of Aborigines Protection Board*, New South Wales Legislative Assembly, 24 November 1937, p 15

immediately fly out all the afflicted.[94] In the end, the Aborigines Protection Board decided to abandon the settlement altogether. In May 1936, a convoy of trucks evacuated the remaining 100 members of the Angledool community to Brewarrina.[95]

Before the 1920s, sexually transmitted diseases were often incurable. Gonorrhoea rendered women infertile and long-term syphilis could be fatal. It was not until after World War I that reliable medical treatment became available and cures could eventually be made. For the entire life of the Aborigines Protection Board, what weighed on the minds of officials equally with sexual morality was public health. This was an important motive behind the policy of sending post-pubescent youth away from Aboriginal reserves into apprenticeships.

The evidence for this has to be read through the language of reticence that people in authority used in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Those who discussed sexual matters in public did not speak with the frankness familiar today. While they could use the name of a sexually transmitted disease, they could not name the bodily parts it affected. They found it difficult to use the word 'rape' to describe an act of sexual violence. Instead of the term 'prostitute' or 'prostitution' they preferred to say a woman was 'leading an immoral life', or engaged in a 'career of vice', or that men were visiting Aboriginal camps 'for immoral purposes'. Hence when the board said the objective of its apprenticeship system was 'to save the children from certain moral degradation on the reserves and camps',[96] we need to understand this in terms of the prevailing conventions of public discourse.

At his mission at Maloga, Daniel Matthews's annual reports recorded a number of incidents that today would be labeled sexual assault or rape. In May 1884, he recorded that two women left the mission to go fishing on the nearby Goulburn River.

> While engaged in this work, an evil-disposed white man took advantage of one of the younger women and induced her to sin. By the girl's statement, it appears the man perpetrated a crime upon her which if inflicted on a white woman would not only have made him a public criminal but

[94] A. C. Pettit, Minutes of evidence, *Select Committee on Administration of Aborigines Protection Board*, New South Wales Legislative Assembly, 30 November 1937, p 52

[95] Roderick Brain, Minutes of evidence, *Select Committee on Administration of Aborigines Protection Board*, New South Wales Legislative Assembly, 25 November 1937, p 30

[96] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1924–25*, p 2

> have brought upon him the contempt and disgust of the entire community.[97]

On another occasion, Matthews described the actions of two Aboriginal youths who sexually assaulted a 17-year-old Aboriginal girl.

> During my absence one night they gained access to the Queensland girl Lucy's bedroom. As soon as I became acquainted with the grave nature of the offence, I ordered them to immediately leave the Station. The girl feeling her humiliating position, cried, asking forgiveness of us, and the God whom she had offended. It appears these young men had previously met Lucy at Narrandera, when she was leading a wicked life with the Blacks who had congregated in that township.[98]

For the first 30 years of the Aborigines Protection Board's existence, it produced a constant stream of commentary from its various local managers, inspectors and board members who linked the dismal lives faced by Aborigines on stations, reserves and camps to their promiscuous sexual behaviour.

> 1884: Brought, as they occasionally are, under the most pernicious influences, it is scarcely wonderful that crime and immorality of the most flagrant kind should often be the result; the wonder is, rather, that so much good and so much capacity for good still remain. They are, owing to their natural simplicity, subject to imposition, and from their low moral standard are constantly liable to become the victims of debauchery and immorality.[99]

> 1891: The condition of some of the camps visited is deplorable. Vice and immorality abound, and apparently little endeavour is made to remedy the existing state of things.[100]

> 1896: We regret that the moral tone of the [Warangesda] Station has been far from satisfactory. While the majority of the residents have conducted themselves circumspectly, a large minority have not done so, some having been guilty of gross misconduct.[101]

> 1897: I desire again to draw the attention of the board to the necessity for finding employment for the boys and girls as they leave school. Could not the State Children's Act be made to apply to enable them to be apprenticed? It is useless to find places for them unless they are bound to their employers, as they will either desert or others will entice them away. If left in the camp their education will only assist to make them rather worse

[97] Matthews, *Ninth Report*, 1884, p 9
[98] Matthews, *Thirteenth Report*, 1888, p 7
[99] Board for the Protection of the Aborigines, *Report, 1883–84, Votes and Proceedings*, Legislative Council of New South Wales, 1883, p 2
[100] Aborigines Protection Association, *Our Black Brethren*, Annual Report for 1891, Sydney, 1892, p 9
[101] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1896*, p 11

> than the present generation, whose laziness, vice and immorality cannot be comprehended by anyone who is not brought constantly into contact with them.[102]

> 1912: It was on record that it was an unusual thing for one of these girls to reach the age of 16 without having a child ... The girls at present had no show in the world. They were the prey of half-castes and low class whites.[103]

Not all station managers despaired about this behaviour all the time. In his 1911 report, the manager of the Burra Bee Dee station near Coonabarabran wrote:

> The provision of better sleeping accommodation has gone far to raise the moral standard; the health of the community has been good; and altogether, the year 1911 has been one of prosperity for the residents.[104]

Optimism of this kind, however, was notable for its rarity. In the board's Ward Registers there is further evidence — sometimes veiled references but in other cases open discussion — of the sexual activities of under-age children. At Brewarrina in 1927, the manager recommended a 13-year-old boy be sent to Kinchela because of his sexual abuse of little girls.

> I regret having to report this boy but he is getting out of control entirely, he will not let the little girls alone, he even goes into their huts and gets into bed besides the girls. Three times the people have told me about, and I have caught him with girls as well.[105]

The most historically contentious piece of legislation in New South Wales was the 1915 amendment to the Aborigines Protection Act, which gave the board the power to itself determine which children should be sent out to apprenticeships. When the Chief Secretary in the Labor government, John Cann, put the bill to parliament, one of his principal justifications was to save pubescent girls on Aboriginal reserves from following their mothers into prostitution:

> I have certain information before me now, but without using names or giving details I wish to inform the House that there are at the present time in our various settlements a number of half-caste children, of ages up to 12 years, actually housed with parents who are leading immoral lives. In some instances these are widows of aboriginals and deserted aboriginal

[102] Report from superintendent of Brungle Station, Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1897*, p 13

[103] 'The Aborigines' Camps: Why the Children Should Be Removed', *Daily Telegraph*, 14 May 1912, p 6

[104] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1911*, p 13

[105] Manager, Brewarrina station to Secretary, Aborigines Protection Board, 21 February 1927, bound with Ward Registers, file no. 643

> women. The moral status of these aboriginals is very different to that of white people. A young girl 13 years of age may be an asset to an aboriginal woman, and unless we empower the board to save these children from lives of that description the result will be that the children are kept with a mother who is actually leading an immoral life.[106]

Peter Read has indicted those who passed bills of this kind and accused them of abandoning their humanitarian responsibilities. 'For two or three generations there was scarcely a word of protest by those whose duty it was to protest: members of parliamentary oppositions, Christians, parents, people of common humanity.'[107] When he made those comments, Read was familiar with the 1915 parliamentary debate, since he quoted the comments of some of the bill's detractors. Yet he kept from his readers the concerns politicians like Cann felt over the sexual morality that prevailed in the Aboriginal camps. It is hard to believe Read could have been unaware of all the examples Cann gave:

> Take another case ... She is leading an immoral and profligate life. Are we to leave these three children with her and not give the board power to look after them?
>
> Mr Scobie: The police can take them now!
>
> Mr J. H. Cann: I am telling the hon. member that the board cannot deal with them now. Take another case. There are two children, 12 and 10 years of age. There is positive proof that the mother is leading an immoral life and neglects these children. Are we to leave them with her?
>
> Mr Fern: The hon. member for Murray said they had to!
>
> Mr J. H. Cann: The hon. member has been talking about children I do not want to touch. Children who are under parental control and being properly looked after and given a fair chance in life I do not want to interfere with. Neither does the bill contemplate interfering with them. Here is another instance. Children of very tender years, 4 and 1. The mother is undoubtedly leading an immoral life. Should not the state, through the board, take charge of these children and look after them? I say that it should.[108]

Today, of course, it would be rare for an Australian politician to make an argument of this kind. We live at a time when the people employed in child protection have been trained in the amoral values of the modern social work profession. They do not find prostitution a

[106] J. H. Cann, *New South Wales Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly, 27 January 1915, p 1951

[107] Read, *Stolen Generations*, p 4

[108] *New South Wales Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly, 27 January 1915, p 1966

problem, preferring to call its practitioners sex workers, and they regard the sexual abuse of under-age girls less important than the right of Aboriginal settlements to practise their own misogynistic cultural ethos.[109]

But just because our own times have largely abandoned standards in sexual matters does not give historians the right to dismiss the genuine concerns of the people of an earlier era, let alone misrepresent their reasons for concern. As Chapters Two and Three demonstrated, from the colonial period to the 1950s, governments of all political persuasions felt it their duty to remove the children of prostitutes and place them either in institutions or foster homes. The authorities were convinced they were acting in the best interests of these children. They thought that if girls discovered how their mothers earned their living, they would probably follow their example. If boys found out what their mothers were doing, they would be psychologically devastated. At a time when venereal diseases were difficult to control or cure, they were also concerned about the public health consequences of unchecked sexual traffic. The policy did not discriminate on grounds of race. White and black prostitutes were treated the same. Unless they reformed, both lost their children for exactly the same reason. Historians have no grounds for claiming that governments that removed the children of prostitutes were engaged in a campaign to eliminate Aboriginality.

THE POLITICS OF VENEREAL DISEASE IN CHILDREN

Perhaps the most implausible of all the academic conspiracy theories in the historiography of the Stolen Generations is Heather Goodall's interpretation of the events at Angledool in 1936. She claimed the Aborigines Protection Board used the apparent outbreak of venereal disease there in order to further its plans for the 'enforced removal and compulsory imprisonment' of most Aboriginal people in New South Wales. It did so, she argued, to panic the state parliament into believing a plague of venereal disease was about to engulf the white

[109] I am referring here to the Orwellian titled 'safety workers' employed by the Queensland Child Safety Department and their response to the 10-year-old Aboriginal girl pack-raped in May 2006 by three adult and six teenage Aboriginal males at the Aurukun settlement. The departmental officers thought that she and other abused children should be returned to Aurukun for the sake of their 'cultural, emotional and spiritual identity'. They recommended the perpetrators of the outrage receive no punishment, a recommendation which a Queensland judge in due course accepted. This case received considerable press coverage throughout Australia and also internationally in December 2007. For an especially clear insight see Helen Dalley, 'Failure to Act is Unforgivable', *Sun-Herald*, 30 December 2007, p 47

population. The board's ultimate objective, she said, was to enforce passage of the 1936 amendment to the Aborigines Protection Act, which would allow it to concentrate the Aborigines on 'a few centrally located and tightly controlled stations'.[110] Goodall wrote:

> This plan to imprison the majority of Aboriginal people in the state was little more than a surrender to the demands of white townspeople, who had for some years been calling for permanent removal and confinement of local Aborigines. Yet there were differences. The Board, although grimly determined to round up and confine Aboriginal people, still insisted that it was intent on changing them, so that in the end they would no longer identify or be identified as Aboriginal, and could then be finally 'dispersed' and removed from reliance on the government ration books.[111]

Hence the relocation of the Angledool station to Brewarrina, she argued, was all part of the board's long-term strategy to eliminate Aboriginal identity. Quite inconsistently, however, Goodall later conceded that the board did not actually need to panic the parliament into passing its 1936 amendment. The board already had the power to relocate its reserves or stations and, indeed, had already taken similar actions in 1923 and 1933.[112]

In our own time, the disclosure that Aboriginal children suffer from sexually-transmitted or venereal diseases has had profound political implications. Individual cases and general statistics alike have emerged in recent years to indicate that something is going terribly wrong in the remote Aboriginal communities of northern Australia. Venereal disease among little children, and even infants, in these communities has provided undeniable evidence of the prevalence of child sexual abuse. In 2007, the report on the Northern Territory by Pat Anderson and Rex Wild, *Little Children are Sacred*,[113] which found child sexual abuse in *all* Aboriginal communities surveyed, provided the impetus for the Commonwealth government to override the lethargy of the Territory government and launch a major, army-led intervention into remote Aboriginal communities.

In December 2007, a further report compiled by the Northern Territory Health Department found 41 cases each of gonorrhoea and chlamydia in Aboriginal children under fifteen, including one case of each in children under five years old. There were also 347 cases of chlamydia and 38 cases of syphilis between the ages of fifteen and

[110] Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, pp 194–7, 378 n 9
[111] Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, p 195
[112] Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, p 197
[113] Rex Wild and Pat Anderson, *Little Children are Sacred*, Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse, Northern Territory Government, Darwin, April 2007

nineteen, plus 498 recorded cases of gonorrhoea between the ages of fifteen and 24.[114] There is no question that this evidence has done irreparable harm to the cause of Aboriginal self-determination. The disclosures have undone much of the work of the academic activism that portrayed the Aborigines as innocent and impotent victims of white depredations.

When writing her book, Goodall understood the power of evidence of this kind for the interpretation of race relations in Australian history. She went out of her way to portray the anxieties of white parents about such diseases in children as part of a general hysteria about sexual contact between the races. She wrote:

> In later years, when white parents were forced to explain just exactly what sort of a threat they believed Aboriginal children posed, they would usually refer to the threat of infectious diseases. Whenever investigations were held, however, Aboriginal children were shown to suffer only from the same diseases of poverty as most of the white children at the school. The real anxieties of white parents were usually revealed to be fears that their children would grow up to form social or sexual relationships with Aboriginal people, which in the rigidly stratified world of country towns represented a major threat to social status.[115]

However, if there was evidence that venereal disease was rife among both adults and children in the Aboriginal camps, it seriously questioned claims about the irrationality of white racism. Moreover, Goodall understood how revelations of this kind threatened the credibility of the Stolen Generations thesis. The outbreak of venereal disease at Angledool in 1936, that is, at the alleged height of the government's removal policy, gave the Aborigines Protection Board what almost anyone, then and now, would regard as good cause to remove children from such an environment.

Goodall's response was inventive. She actually denied that the outbreak at Angledool was venereal disease. She confined her discussion to disease of the eyes and declared it was only trachoma, a common outback eye infection caused by flies and dust. She claimed, without providing any checkable source, that in 1980 the well-known ophthalmologist, the late Professor Fred Hollows, reviewed the surviving documentary evidence of the Angledool cases and confirmed the disease was unlikely to have been gonococcal ophthalmia.[116] However, if Hollows ever did review this evidence, and if he had relied

[114] Ashleigh Wilson, 'Under-5s Found With Sex Diseases', *The Australian*, 19 December 2007, p 6

[115] Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, pp 109–10

[116] Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, p 378 n 9

upon Goodall to provide the historical documents, he would have been badly misled.

In *Invasion to Embassy*, Goodall omitted any evidence that led to a different conclusion. She withheld from her readers all the contemporary evidence given by medical officers. She neglected to report the testimony to the 1937 parliamentary select committee by the nurse Ivy Pratt, who was able to clearly distinguish between cases of trachoma and gonococcal ophthalmia. The inquiry acknowledged Sister Pratt's long experience treating Aborigines for trachoma and had once caught the disease herself from an Aboriginal patient. Goodall failed to mention Pratt's identification of the existence of venereal diseases other than those of the eyes. She neglected to say that two medical doctors personally inspected patients at Angledool and Brewarrina and supported Pratt's opinion.[117] Goodall failed to report the emergency airlift proposed by one of those doctors. She also ignored all the relevant health and medical evidence to the parliamentary select committee by two successive managers of the Brewarrina station. No one should take her assurances as the last word on this subject.

THE SEXUAL VULNERABILITY OF GIRLS IN APPRENTICESHIP

Removing girls from Aboriginal camps to send them into domestic service was far from a perfect solution to their sexual vulnerability. It introduced problems of its own. The board was always aware that sending girls to apprenticeship did not preclude their early sexual activity. The apprenticeship of white girls had addressed the same issue. When Henry Parkes introduced the colony's boarding-out system in 1881, he said he was concerned that a 'large proportion of young girls' could 'go astray after exchanging the severe restraints of Institution life for the comparatively unrestricted life of apprenticeship'.[118]

Aborigines Protection Board members were not the only ones in the field aware of this. It became a public issue in some of the parliamentary debates on extending the powers of the board. For instance, in the debate over the 1915 amendment to the Aborigines Protection Act, the Labor member for Namoi, George Black, spoke

[117] Ivy Pratt, Minutes of evidence, *Select Committee on Administration of Aborigines Protection Board*, New South Wales Legislative Assembly, 22 November 1937, pp 1–2; A. C. Pettit, Minutes of evidence, 30 November 1937, p 52; James Danvers, Minutes of evidence, 15 December 1937, pp 73–5

[118] Parkes Correspondence, Vol 5, p 5, Mitchell Library, cited by John Ramsland, 'The Development of Boarding-Out Systems in Australia 1860–1910', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, 60, 3, September 1974, p 195

against his own party's bill. He accused the boarding-out system itself of responsibility for the increase in the birth rate of half-caste babies because it often left girls on pastoral stations alone and at risk.

> They sleep anywhere, there is no supervision exercised over them. It often happens that the mistress of the home and all white women are absent from the station for two or three days attending a show or a race meeting. During their absence these poor unfortunate black girls are left to the mercy of the men on the station, and the result is the increase of the half-caste population, and the ruin of the girls who are subject to this treatment. The whole system is absolutely wrong. There should be no such danger in regard to these unfortunate girls.[119]

The board's regulations and practice for the placement of female apprentices were specifically designed to protect their virtue. The host family was previously inspected and interviewed by the board's home-finders. Mindful of the prospect of girls being seduced while alone in the house with male employers, they only sent them to families that had young children. To prevent them being seduced in their own recreation time, the girls were not allowed out of the house by themselves until they turned eighteen. They could only go out with the family. 'If we went to the show, Jessie would come too,' one employer wrote. 'When we went for holidays to the mountains, Jessie came too.'[120] Nonetheless, there was still a belief at large that these girls were sexually vulnerable.

The issue was raised again by the 1937 parliamentary select committee inquiry into the Aborigines Protection Board. The manager of the Brewarrina Aboriginal station, Roderick Brain, was questioned on the subject, but he played down its incidence.

> Is it a fact that these girls who are apprenticed are what is regarded as 'easy marks' and are treated very lightly by some people who might not actually be their employers but who live at the employer's house? — I should say that knowing them on the stations and how they carry on, they would be 'easy marks'. With only one exception, I have no knowledge personally of any employers or any man misconducting themselves with the girls.
>
> *Mr Horsington.* Then where do all the quarter-castes and the half-castes come from? — Apart from odd cases, the half-castes today are the chil-

[119] George M. Black, *New South Wales Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly, 27 January 1915, p 1958. According to Peter Read, (*Stolen Generations*, p 20) another politician added: 'Girls who were taken would be exposed to more vice than if they had remained in the camps'. However, this is Read's own embellishment since no one actually used those words in the 1915 debate.

[120] Brindley, The Home on the Hill, p 128, quoting from a letter of Mrs Corona Adams of Nundle, April 1984, describing an earlier period

> dren of other caste people. For the most part, these people are not mixing with either black or white persons, but with castes and caste. Of course, there are cases with the apprenticed girls; but generally, a caste aborigine marries or mixes with caste aborigines: it is rare to see them with a full-blood black or a full-blood white. I know very few half-castes. They have all been quarter-castes, octoroons or others.[121]

The board's Ward Registers do record a number of female apprentices leaving their employment in order to give birth. Their numbers, however, were very few and do not support the myths that have been spread about this issue. Of the apprentices in the Ward Registers from 1907 to 1932, there are records of this happening to only 26 girls aged from fourteen to nineteen years. This was only 4.5 per cent of the 577 girls recorded in the registers.

This is, of course, a much lower figure than anyone has been led to believe, then or since. The result was not due to any reticence by the board to document this kind of information, since it usually went out of its way to record the salient details, including the date of the birth, the hospital where the baby was delivered, its sex and name, and where the new mother took the child afterwards.

Inara Walden has claimed the real proportion of apprentice pregnancy was one in eleven, or 9 per cent.[122] However, to get this figure she must have counted girls over the age of apprenticeship. As well as recording births to apprentices, the Ward Registers routinely recorded births to its former wards aged twenty and over, complete with all the same details. But the latter were all long past their apprenticeships and hence should not be included in the total of 26 recorded here. Walden thought her higher figure demonstrated how the girls were 'extremely vulnerable to abuse', but this is fanciful. Even if her count had been accurate, 9 per cent was a far lower pregnancy rate than contemporary observers reported from the Aboriginal reserves among girls of the same age. On these reserves, it was not only common for girls of thirteen, fourteen and fifteen years of age to get pregnant and give birth, it was then the norm — just as in the remote communities today, it is still the norm.[123]

In short, the claim by historians that Aboriginal apprentices in white homes were more sexually susceptible than the girls who

[121] R. R. Brain, Minutes of evidence, *Select Committee on Administration of Aborigines Protection Board*, New South Wales Legislative Assembly, 22 November 1937, p 10

[122] Inara Walden, 'Steps Bring Back Some Humanity', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 February 2008, p 16. She wrote: 'one in eleven girls became pregnant while apprenticed', that is, 9.1 per cent.

[123] Paul Toohey, 'Child-Mums in Cycle of Neglect', *The Australian*, 29 February, 2008, p 1

remained on the reserves is untrue. The concerns of some contemporary politicians were similarly unwarranted. Indeed, given its track record, it would have been hard to find a more effective policy to inhibit pregnancies among Aboriginal girls aged thirteen to seventeen than the system of boarding them out as apprentices. This constituted yet another measure of how the system was both successful in its own terms and in the best interests of the Aboriginal girls who took part in it.

CHAPTER FIVE

Life in the institutions

> Life at Cootamundra was bleak and sterile. The mental anguish of a sudden transition from family and community to an institutional life which reiterated daily the worthlessness of blacks was a burden which some found impossible to bear.
>
> — Peter Read, *A Hundred Years War*[1]

> The staff at the homes varied between those who might have been good in another environment, and the psychopathic. The better ones took an interest in the children, they were called 'mum' or 'dad', and tried to overcome a sterile and hostile environment. But their horizons were lowered in living from day to day, they were overworked, and probably all of them were brutalized by the system in which they had chosen to work. What can be said of the 'good' officials is that during their care the children did not suffer more than they had to, and may have suffered less, under a system which was barbaric in its execution and indefensible in its intent. The bad officials were monsters.
>
> — Peter Read, *The Stolen Generations*[2]

> The children appear well scrubbed, adequately dressed and 'tamed', but a closer reading of their eyes and bodies tells of fear, blankness, withdrawal and the vertiginous feeling of having no past and few defences in a strange and alien new world.
>
> — Anna Haebich, *Broken Circles*[3]

[1] Peter Read, *A Hundred Years War: The Wiradjuri People and the State*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1988, p 67

[2] Peter Read, *The Stolen Generations: The Removal of Aboriginal Children in New South Wales 1883 to 1969*, NSW Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, Sydney, Occasional Paper No. 1, Sydney, 1981, pp 10–11

MANY of the images cultivated by the historians of the Stolen Generations derive from English novels about forsaken children of the Victorian era and their modern interpretation on film and television. Oliver Twist was removed from his mother at childbirth and sent first to a baby farm and, when aged nine, to a workhouse. Jane Eyre was a 10-year-old orphan when sent by her aunt to the grim Lowood School where she remained until she turned eighteen. We are coaxed into accepting similar pictures of stolen Aboriginal children and similar lengths of detention. Peter Read's pamphlet *The Stolen Generations* suggested the great majority were removed to Aboriginal homes for children, which he characterized as bleak houses in the worst tradition of Victorian institutions. Those removed from their families allegedly spent their entire childhoods there. The authorities, we were told, kept them for so long a time to ensure they lost their Aboriginal identity.

As Chapter Two demonstrated, in New South Wales that portrait is largely untrue. Two–thirds of those removed were teenagers and their biggest single destination was not an institution but the workforce. Nonetheless, there were some who did spent time in one or two of the state's four main Aboriginal institutions. In the period discussed here there were four institutions established for Aboriginal children in New South Wales: the Singleton Home for Children, run by the Aborigines Inland Mission from 1905 to 1918 and by the Aborigines Protection Board from 1918 to 1923; the Bomaderry Children's Home, run by the United Aborigines Mission from 1908 to 1980; the Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls' Home run by the Aborigines Protection Board from 1912 to 1968; and the Kinchela Aboriginal Boys' Training Home run by the Aborigines Protection Board from 1924 to 1970. The Singleton and Bomaderry homes accommodated younger children, from babies to about ten years of age, while Cootamundra and Kinchela housed mostly older children. This chapter examines the various claims made about the children's experiences in them.

DEGREE OF SEPARATION AND LENGTH OF INSTITUTIONALIZATION

Two things stand out from even a cursory analysis of the data in the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Board's Ward Registers: most children who spent time in these institutions were not there very long, and, instead of losing contact, the majority returned home to their Aboriginal parents and communities. These two facts alone disprove the claim that these institutions functioned to make their

[3] Anna Haebich, *Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families 1800–2000*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 2001, p 344

inmates forget their Aboriginality. Indeed, the experience of Aborigines mirrors the experience of white children in Australia's Victorian-era child welfare institutions, few of whom spent many years in them, and most of whom were reunited with their families. In other words, in Australia the image of Victorian institutions bequeathed by novelists and film-makers is largely a myth — for both white and black children.

It was rare for a child, either white or black, who entered a welfare institution to spend its whole childhood there. This has been clearly documented in the history of white child welfare in Australia. In institutions for white children in the late nineteenth century, of those who had at least one parent alive, the Protestant Orphan School reunited 85 per cent with their families, the Roman Catholic Orphan School reunited 88 per cent, and the Randwick Asylum reunited 50 per cent. The historian who produced these statistics, Michael Horsburgh, argued that instead of being institutions that housed children from infancy to adulthood, they 'fulfilled a temporary care function for families in various disadvantaged situations'. Many white children were lodged there by the parents only until their circumstances changed. Most of the applicants to have children returned were their mothers, who stated they had either remarried or had improved their financial situation.[4]

The data in the Ward Registers of the Aborigines Protection Board tell a similar story. Between 1912 and 1932, of the girls sent either directly or indirectly to the Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls' Home, the files show a total of 137 were eventually reunited with their family or returned to the Aboriginal station from where they came. This was a reuniting rate of 67 per cent of the 204 girls at Cootamundra who had one parent alive. At Kinchela, the situation was similar. Of the boys sent there from 1924 to 1932, either directly or from another home, 23 returned to either their family or their Aboriginal station. This was a reuniting rate of 52 per cent of the 44 boys at Kinchela who had one parent alive. Only at the two small institutions for younger children did the rate of return fall below 50 per cent, but not by much. Of the 91 children sent to Bomaderry, 43 per cent returned home; and of the 64 children sent to Singleton, 48 per cent returned home.

At both Cootamundra and Kinchela, the length of stay was correlated directly with the age of the child. From its first intake in 1912 up to 1932, the Ward Registers record the dates of both arrival and

[4] Michael Horsburgh, 'The Apprenticing of Dependent Children in New South Wales Between 1850 and 1885', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 7, November 1980, Table 2, p 38

departure of 193 girls. The majority of them, 109 girls or 57 per cent of those whose ages were recorded, were of the workforce age of thirteen years or older. For these girls, their residence there was comparatively short: two thirds of them stayed less than twelve months. The 13-year-olds stayed an average of twelve months; 14-year-olds an average of fifteen months; 15-year-olds an average of nine months; 16-year-olds an average of seven months; 17-year-olds an average of eight months.

The younger girls, that is, those aged twelve or less, were at Cootamundra (or at Bomaderry or Singleton *plus* Cootamundra) for longer periods, often until they reached working age. Even so, only a very small number were institutionalized for the duration of their childhood. Of those whose length of residence was recorded, a number left long before they reached working age. There were six of these young girls who were returned either to their mothers or grandmothers, and whose average stay was twelve months. Another six girls were removed by the State Children's Relief Department for reasons not given, and four more left for hospital treatment and did not return. There were 39 girls aged from two to nine years who remained there for an average of five years or longer. They constituted 21 per cent of the residents of Cootamundra for whom ages were recorded. Only this last group comes close to fitting the popular image of long-term institutionalized children. In other words, about 80 per cent of the girls at Cootamundra were not long-term inmates. At Kinchela, the period for which data are available is much shorter but the picture is still similar. The typical period of institutionalization of its boys was less than four years and only a handful remained there for more than five years.

At these tender ages, five years must, of course, have seemed like a very long time. As Table 5.1 demonstrates, there were only a small number in this last situation who skewed the average upwards. Most of them were orphans or were severely neglected. In other words, they had either no fit parents, or no parents at all, to whom the board could return them.

Overall, the picture given by the age of the children and the length of time they spent at Cootamundra and Kinchela is not that of institutions dedicated to permanent separation and the elimination of Aboriginality. Only about 20 per cent of children were separated for what could plausibly be regarded as a long period of time. The length of stay of the great majority was what one would reasonably expect of a vocational training institution.

TABLE 5.1: AGE AT SEPARATION AND PERIOD OF RESIDENCE OF CHILDREN SENT TO COOTAMUNDRA AND KINCHELA, 1913–1932

Age at separation of children sent to Cootamundra and Kinchela	Number of girls whose length of residence was recorded	Average period of residence (months), girls	Number of boys whose length of residence was recorded	Average period of residence (months), boys
Less than one	–		–	
One	–		–	
Two	1	5	–	
Three	2	64	–	
Four	1	175	1	5
Five	5	77	2	116
Six	3	83	1	144
Seven	9	93	–	–
Eight	9	77	3	60
Nine	10	66	6	55
Ten	14	37	10	45
Eleven	20	38	5	36
Twelve	13	24	1	2
Thirteen	20	12	2	6
Fourteen	43	15	1	15
Fifteen	23	9	–	
Sixteen	14	7	–	
Seventeen	6	8	–	
Eighteen	–		–	
Nineteen	–		–	
Twenty	–		–	
Twenty-one	–		–	

Source: Ward Registers 1916–1928, Aborigines Protection Board, NSW State Archives. This table records those children sent directly to Cootamundra and Kinchela as well as those originally sent to the Bomaderry and Singleton homes and then sent on to Cootamundra or Kinchela.

SEGREGATED INSTITUTIONS AND ETHNIC IDENTITY

> Kinchela Boys' Home, a feared place where boys removed from their families were kept in loneliness and abuse, to teach them to forget their Aboriginality.
>
> — Heather Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy* [5]

If the Aborigines Protection Board really had a policy to make boys forget their Aboriginality, it chose an odd way to go about it. If anyone seriously wanted to assimilate a minority group into a mainstream population, the last thing they would do is create an ethnically segregated institution. The very existence of institutions exclusively for Aborigines guaranteed that they would *not* forget their Aboriginality. Keeping Aboriginal boys together only emphasized their common interests and common grievances. If you really wanted people to forget they were Aborigines, you would send them to institutions that did not recognize any ethnic identity or social minority status. During World War II, there was one important institution that acted in this very way, the Australian Army, which made a major positive contribution towards ending racial divisions by treating Aboriginal men as soldiers first, just like everyone else.

Nothing was more certain to produce the opposite outcome than establishing an institution with its entire intake from a minority group who could be distinguished from both its staff and the outside majority population by the colour of their skin. Ushering Aboriginal children together from various regions would only give them a sense of how they shared a common fate. The sole mutual identity these institutions would have created would have been that of Aboriginality.

This happened not only in the handful of little institutions established by the Aborigines Protection Board in the 1910s and 1920s. It was also one of the results of herding Aboriginal adults together onto stations and reserves in the same period. Until the British came to Australia, there was no such thing as 'Aboriginality', that is, a self-conscious ethnic identity that applied to all indigenous people. Instead, they were divided into hundreds of small groups with their own languages and customs, each of whom had their own identity. Segregating some onto missions, stations and reserves where they shared a common experience was probably the single biggest progenitor of a pan-Aboriginal identity. Even left-wing academic historians such as Bain Attwood have recognised the truth of this.[6]

[5] Heather Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1770–1972*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1996, p 142

[6] Bain Attwood, *The Making of the Aborigines*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1989

Hence, the idea that the institutions at Kinchela and Cootamundra would have made children *lose* their Aboriginality is inherently implausible. On the contrary, these places were more likely to have *produced* a sense of Aboriginality. In fact, one can see this clearly from the fact that many of the leading Aboriginal political activists of the past 30 years, in particular Charles Perkins and Lowitja O'Donohue, had spent some of their childhood in segregated institutions.

THE EFFECTS OF INSTITUTIONALIZATION

> The children were emotionally, spiritually, intellectually and psychologically deprived, and the scare might never heal. In a mid-western town I met an ex-Kinchela man ... He could not, or would not, talk of his experiences there. He was divorced, had been an alcoholic, and was deeply unhappy. I saw him one morning unable to decide whether to go to see the doctor or chemist for advice on one of the many ailments with which his life seemed to be preoccupied. Kinchela crippled that man for life.
>
> — Peter Read, *The Stolen Generations*[7]

This passage is another example of the standard of analysis Read brought to this subject. While the man he met did show some well-known symptoms of a person who had spent much of his childhood in an institution, if he refused to tell him about what happened at Kinchela then Read cannot honestly conclude he had been crippled for life by his experiences there.

There is little doubt, however, that all institutionalized children suffer in some way from the process. This is nothing peculiar to Aboriginal children. Even the best run welfare institutions fall far short of best practice in child rearing, that is, of growing up in the care of natural parents. We should expect any child who has been institutionalized to be adversely affected in some way. Nonetheless, if we are to assess the institutions operated by the Aborigines Protection Board we need more evidence than Read offers before accepting his severe conclusions.

As Chapter One noted, the former Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in the Keating government, Robert Tickner, thought there was a strong connection between stolen children and those who had a later history of incarceration. Between 1987 and 1991, the Royal Commission into Deaths in Custody investigated 99 fatalities of Aboriginal prison inmates and found 43 of them were of men separated from their parents as children. 'If that doesn't tell the story, nothing else

[7] Read, *Stolen Generations*, p 11

will.' Tickner told a Darwin conference in 1994.[8] He was implicitly arguing that the institutionalization of children was a process that produced people who were more likely to be institutionalized later in their lives. However, in the case of children placed in the institutions run by the Aborigines Protection Board, the available data for New South Wales do not support this conclusion.

Of the 45 boys in the ward registers who went to Kinchela up to 1932, only two were subsequently recorded as being subject to some form of institutionalization. One boy later went to a mental institution, the other to a penal institution. Of the 230 girls in the ward registers who went to Cootamundra, fourteen later went to mental institutions, ten to penal institutions, seven to a female refuge (for prostitutes), six to Ormond House (for transfer to other institutions), and two to a convent. That is, after being inmates of Kinchela and Cootamundra, only 4.4 per cent of boys and 16.9 per cent of girls went on to some other institution. In other words, the overwhelming majority of children did *not* become inmates of any other institution.

While it is possible that these records were incomplete and some later transfers to institutions might have been omitted, this is unlikely to have distorted the overall picture greatly. Officials routinely recorded information of this kind when the wards were teenagers and young adults, especially about problem children, since the board retained legal responsibility, *in loco parentis*, for as long as they remained wards.

Hence these records do not support the conclusion that childhood institutionalization produced the kind of institution-dependent personality that Read described. Given that the majority of children who went to Kinchela and Cootamundra were orphans and/or neglected children to start with, the records indicate that neither of these two institutions can be accused of adding even more burdens to the problems these children already bore in their young lives.

ISOLATION FROM PARENTS AT INSTITUTIONS

> While children in the compounds [at Aboriginal settlements] often had some, albeit strictly supervised, contact with adults and family in the adjacent Aboriginal camps, those in the children's homes were totally cut off from Aboriginal adults. Indeed children at the Bomaderry Infants Home 'were cut off from the rest of the world — we barely saw anybody'.
>
> — Anna Haebich, *Broken Circles*[9]

[8] Robert Tickner speech recorded in Jacqui Katona and Chips Mackinolty, eds, *The Long Road Home: The Going Home Conference 3–6 October 1994*, Karu Aboriginal Child Care Agency, Darwin, 1996, p 14

[9] Haebich, *Broken Circles*, p 346

> One *Annual Report* of the 1920s predicted that the children, once institutionalized, would not be allowed to return to any Aboriginal station or reserve, 'except perhaps those who have parents, on an occasional visit'. In practice, no home visits were allowed at all. Parents received no encouragement to come, and were positively discouraged if they attempted to stay more than a day. Even the Christmas holidays were generally spent in the homes. Letters in and out were censored.
>
> — Peter Read, *The Stolen Generations*[10]

The information in the above passages is false. Indeed, in New South Wales the Aborigines Protection Board not only allowed parents to visit their offspring in children's homes, it paid for them to do so. Read's statement 'Parents received no encouragement to come' is untrue. In May 1919, for instance, the board passed the following motion:

> All cases where Aborigine children are removed from Aborigine reserves to the Homes under the control of the Board or to domestic service, the parents of such children shall have the right to visit the child at least once a year. Travelling and reasonable sustenance allowance to be paid by the Board. Application for such privileges to be made through the manager who must send same forthwith to the Board with all the necessary particulars.[11]

When he made his claim in 1981, Read also had information from his own interviews with institutionalized children that contradicted it. Two years before he wrote *The Stolen Generations*, he recorded an interview with Aileen Wedge at Erambie about her time at Cootamundra in the 1940s. Wedge told him the visits she received were regular and frequent.

> My father, he always used to come over on pension day, and me birthday. I didn't really know me mother properly. It was always him.[12]

Another equally false claim is that once the children entered the board's homes they were never allowed to return to their families. Evidence provided by the children themselves contradicts this. Merryl-Leigh Brindley interviewed one girl who spent some time at both Bomaderry and Cootamundra:

> I was about ten, I think — it was just before the war ended. I'd been in and out of Bomaderry Home and then, suddenly, off to Coota. Don't know why — never told. Used to go back home every now and then but

[10] Read, *Stolen Generations*, p 10
[11] Aborigines Protection Board, Minutes, 14 May 1919
[12] Peter Read, *Down There With Me on the Cowra Mission*, Pergamon Press, Sydney, 1989, p 102

> Mum and Dad drank a bit so they'd keep checking on us — the welfare — and in we'd go again.[13]

The minutes of meetings of the Aborigines Protection Board indicate that the return of children from the institution to their parents was longstanding practice. In February 1927, for instance, the minutes record:

> Return of F... child now at Cootamundra Home to the care of her mother at Brewarrina. Approved.[14]

Brindley interviewed a woman who entered the Cootamundra home in the 1930s after her mother had gone to the Waterfall Sanatorium for tuberculosis sufferers. Initially, the girl remained in the Griffith–Leeton district with her grandmother. She was later sent back and forth between Cootamundra and her grandmother, depending on the state of the latter's health:

> Thing is, I'd been back twice I think, to my Gran when she got better but then she'd get worse and back they'd bring me.[15]

The practices in the homes for Aboriginal children were, if anything, more considerate of family relations than welfare homes for white children. They were similar to those of boarding schools for white children where it was unusual for parents to visit more than once or twice a year. The main problem for Aboriginal parents who wanted to visit was accommodation. While the board paid for their train fares and food, it did not provide them with shelter. Another interview by Brindley with a former Cootamundra girl described the problem:

> *Did your family ever visit you?* Once or twice, my mother came. Problem was there was nowhere for them to stay. I remember Mate [Matron] smuggled one of the mothers in once, let her sleep in the school, and an Inspector came unexpectedly and boy, was there a row. After that they had to stay in town. One girl's mother slept in the cemetery when she came to visit — it was just down the hill a bit. Just as well it was summer.

As Chapter Two recorded, when girls were apprenticed to employers they often returned home for the holidays. One girl who

[13] Merryl-Leigh Brindley, The Home on the Hill: The Story Behind the Cootamundra Girls' Home, MA (Aboriginal Studies) thesis, University of South Australia, 1994, p 174. (While unpublished theses should not normally be cited in works of scholarship because they are usually inaccessible, Brindley's thesis is different since a bound, typeset and illustrated version is available in the Mitchell Library, Sydney.)

[14] Aborigines Protection Board, Minutes of previous meeting, 4 February 1927

[15] Brindley, The Home on the Hill, p 164

entered service in June 1928 was taken home by one of the board's female officers for a holiday with her parents in December 1929. Another girl spent three weeks holiday with her parents on Brungle Aboriginal Station before returning to her position as a domestic servant in Sydney.[16] Margaret Tucker, the central figure of the apocryphal film *Lousy Little Sixpence*, retained personal contact with her parents and sisters throughout her apprenticeship in the late 1910s. She and her mother exchanged letters and both her parents visited the Sydney household to which she was first apprenticed and met her employer. In her second job in Sydney, her mother, sisters and aunt visited her several times. Tucker also went home for two weeks' holiday at Moonahcullah Aboriginal Station, and then returned to her job.[17] There is no truth in the story that government policy made such things forbidden.

THE LOSS OF FAMILY LOVE

> A lot of the women from here, if you'd talk to them they'd probably say that they were all fed and that they got an education and all that. What they don't say is that they missed out totally, emotionally on family. What it's like to belong somewhere. I mean, anyone can feed or educate someone, but it's not everyone who can give the love that you need.
>
> — Coral Edwards, discussing the Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls' Home[18]

In Anne Deveson's 1984 seven-part ABC television series, *Faces of Change*, she devoted an episode to the Stolen Generations. It comprised interviews with a small number of ex-inmates of the Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls' Home. When she was a baby, Coral Edwards was found by a court to be a neglected child and was sent to Cootamundra with her two sisters, aged ten and four years old. Edwards became the home's longest inhabitant. She spent her entire childhood there, from infancy to adolescence. She never forgave those officials who devised the policy that led to her removal. In 1980 she and the historian Peter Read founded the social welfare agency Link-Up, which became the progenitor of the campaign that made the Stolen Generations a public issue. In her interview, Edwards told Deveson that whatever her family circumstances had been when she was a baby, nothing justified her removal.

[16] Ward Registers, files no. 656, 731. For other examples, see Ward Registers, files no. 74, 741, 761 and 767

[17] Margaret Tucker, *If Everyone Cared: Autobiography of Margaret Tucker MBE* (1977), Grosvenor, Melbourne, 1983 ed., pp 120–30

[18] Coral Edwards, interview in Anne Deveson, *Faces of Change*, (book of the television series), ABC/Fontana, Melbourne, 1984, p 106

> Anne: Do you think you gained anything from coming here?
>
> Coral: No.
>
> Anne: And yet Mate [Matron] said that when you came here you were almost dying from malnutrition.
>
> Coral: Well, if I was, I should have had the right to die. I should have been allowed to stay with my family and live through whatever I was going to live through. Not for other people to take us and try to save us by their own values ...
>
> Anne: But you mightn't have lived?
>
> Coral: Then that was my right to die.
>
> Anne: Or you might have become an alcoholic?
>
> Coral: Might have. Then again, I might not have. We were taught that Aboriginals were drunks. But that's a white person's values on life, how they saw us.[19]

This is a dilemma faced by many officials responsible for child welfare. They are sometimes confronted with a choice between two evils and know that whatever decision they make will have tragic consequences. If they knowingly leave a child with a culpably irresponsible or violent parent, and the child suffers gross abuse or dies, then they are partly responsible. If they remove the child, they deprive it of the possibility of parental love and family association. Although she recognized this dilemma, Edwards still insisted those whites who opted for removal were wrong.

> I think my feelings now about the Home is mainly anger. It was genocide! Split up families — what right did they have?[20]

Edwards's resentment and her interpretation of the policy as genocide eventually turned this issue into a major national scandal. Despite the now widespread acceptance of her views, however, there remain two problems with them. The most obvious one is that the removal of white children confronted authorities with exactly the same dilemma. Faced with any child, white or black, that was so neglected it suffered malnutrition, welfare officers would have to weigh up the known emotional costs against saving the child's life. They would invariably take the latter option. Edwards is understandably bitter at the hand life dealt her but wrong to assume that things were any different for neglected Aboriginal children than for those who were white.

[19] Edwards in Deveson, *Faces of Change*, p 106
[20] Edwards in Deveson, *Faces of Change*, p 96

The second problem for Edwards's case is that there were very few Aboriginal girls institutionalized for as long as she was, and some of those who spent shorter periods at Cootamundra, and hence less time away from their family, did not find their position tragic at all. In fact, some thought Cootamundra improved their prospects in life. In the same television program, Deveson interviewed an unidentified Aboriginal woman who had only positive things to say about the girls' home.

> My mum and dad split up back in 1957. My mum was workin' at the cannery in Leeton, to keep us going. She had nine of us. But then after two years she found that she couldn't manage going to work at the cannery and supporting nine kids. So, there was nothing else for Mum. She put us into the girls' home at Cootamundra. I thought it was pretty good. There were ups and downs there, like any other home. I think if I'd have been on a mission or something, probably wouldn't have been educated. I got a job, got me certificate. Went to work at the telephone exchange at Cootamundra, transferred down to Sydney, and done a few other clerical jobs since. So, I've got no regrets about being in there.[21]

Two other interviews that provide a balance to Edwards's jaundiced views were made by Merryl-Leigh Brindley. Cootamundra obviously could provide no substitute for parental love but it nonetheless did a reasonable job of caring for its charges. And contrary to Edwards's claims, both interviewees were fully aware of, and able to discuss, the family relationships they had missed out on. A woman who had been at Cootamundra in the 1950s said:

> The whole problem with the place was that it was an institution — cross between an army camp and a boarding school — but at least you could go home to your family in between. I was reasonably happy there. We were looked after, fed and clothed and I think it gave me a chance in life. But to call it a 'Home' is wrong — not the sort of home I hope my kids will remember. It was an institution, but for me it was the only home I can remember and perhaps it wasn't so bad at that.[22]

Another woman who was there in the 1940s was asked by Brindley:

> *Were you happy at the Home?* I suppose I was, looking back. We were certainly looked after, well fed and that. But it was an institution, after all — not the same as your own home. I can understand why they took me — mum and dad were terrible when they were on the grog — in fact we were dead scared — used to bash us up. Drink's the curse of our race — just can't seem to handle it. So I suppose I was better off — lived to tell the tale as they say.[23]

[21] Unidentified woman in Deveson, *Faces of Change*, pp 109–10
[22] Brindley, The Home on the Hill, p 116
[23] Brindley, The Home on the Hill, p 175

QUALITY OF ACCOMMODATION

The cinema version of the Dickensian institution is one of cold, inhumane stone walls that oppressed the souls of their inmates. The standard historical literature of Aboriginal institutions perpetuates the same myth, though in Australia the stone walls of England are replaced by fences made of barbed wire. That is how the Moore River Native Settlement in Western Australia was portrayed in the film *Rabbit-Proof Fence*. One thing I do not want to do is defend either the Moore River settlement or the state regime that administered it, both of which were a disgrace, even in their own terms. However, this is definitely untrue of the institutions in New South Wales, especially Cootamundra and Kinchela, which were well-funded, high quality establishments that bore no resemblance to their west-coast counterpart.

The Cootamundra building was originally the local hospital for one of the wealthiest grazing and agricultural districts in the colony. The colonial government made a grant of £1000 and the local citizenry matched it to create a small but impressive public hospital. Premier Henry Parkes laid the foundation stone in 1887 and the Governor of New South Wales, Lord Carrington, performed the opening ceremony in 1889. Despite the community pride invested in it, the 'hospital on the hill' turned out to be inconveniently located. It was on the wrong side of the railway line and the township of Cootamundra developed two miles away in the opposite direction. Within twenty years, a new and better located hospital was built in the town and the old building was left vacant.

It was just what the Aborigines Protection Board wanted. It was surrounded by 35 acres of land and, although comparatively isolated, was still accessible enough to the railway station and the prosperous township. In February 1911, the board bought it from the local hospital committee for £500. [24]

The building was a single storey of solid brick designed by the Government Architects, Morell and Kemp of Sydney. It had a large central ward, a smaller female ward, a committee room, dispensary, nurses' room and operating theatre. The standard Victorian-era high ceilings plus verandas on four sides ensured all the rooms were comparatively cool in Cootamundra's sweltering summer but, concomitantly, cold in winter when the outside temperature could on some nights drop below freezing. The two wards, the nurses' room and the committee room all had fireplaces but in their memoirs the inhabitants often remarked on the cold. Former matron Ella Hiscocks recalled:

[24] Brindley, The Home on the Hill, pp 76–9

> It was lovely and cool in the summer but, my dear, like a morgue in winter — those thick walls and high ceilings. It was a business getting the clothes dry in winter — we'd have clothes everywhere draped in front of the fire.[25]

The main hospital ward became the senior girls' dormitory. That is, the quality of their accommodation was identical to that of the white patients before them. Two of the verandas were subsequently built in to become a junior girls' dormitory and a schoolroom. The girls' school began taking classes in 1913 and later moved into a separate building in the former nurses' home in the school grounds.[26] The old operating theatre, committee room and dispensary became the matron's living quarters and office. In the 1920s and 1930s, further buildings were added or extended including the kitchen, laundry, toilet block, a dairy and windmill.[27]

Before it was purchased to house Aboriginal boys, Kinchela had been a dairy farm founded and worked since the 1880s by the Aboriginal family of Andrew Drew. It was not a Victorian institution, or a former hospital like Cootamundra. At the 32-acre site on the Macleay River up to 50 boys slept in the bedrooms of a small group of houses built by the Aborigines Protection Board in 1923–24.[28] Each house had the same dimensions and materials as the farmhouses or timber-and-fibro suburban cottages of a great many white Australians. The model for the settlement were the cottage-style, state-supported homes that emerged at the same time for neglected and delinquent white children. The dairy farm remained operational, with the older boys performing daily chores before and after school. The one-room school taught the special elementary curriculum for Aboriginal children.

The Bomaderry home was similar to Kinchela. It was not a farm but began as one cottage built on 2.5 acres of land a short distance from the railway station. By the late 1920s private benefactors had donated more land and allowed the home to expand to four cottages accommodating 25 Aboriginal children of both sexes. The cottages were similar in style and construction to others in the prosperous local town of Nowra.[29]

[25] Brindley, The Home on the Hill, p 147

[26] Peter Kabaila, *Cootamundra: The Aboriginal Girls Home*, Peter Rimas Kabaila, AIATSIS-funded project, 1994, pp 4, 26

[27] Brindley, The Home on the Hill, p 84–94

[28] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report*, 1923–24, p 2

[29] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report*, 1927–28, p 2; E. J. Telfer, *Amongst Australian Aborigines: Forty Years of Missionary Work. The Story of the United Aborigines' Mission*, E. J. Telfer, Sydney, 1939, Chapter 10: 'Bomaderry and the Bairns'

The Singleton institution was originally a rather grand two-storey, brick and stone neo-Gothic rural homestead, named St Clair, about thirteen miles from the township of Singleton. In 1905 the local Anglican congregation provided the funds to rent it for the Aborigines Inland Mission, who conducted it with support from the Aborigines Protection Board until the board purchased it outright in 1918.[30]

In short, the four institutions for Aboriginal children in New South Wales were all quality properties. Two of them had previously housed white occupants in considerable style, while the other two were collections of cottages built to the same standards as those inhabited by white rural town dwellers and suburbanites.

THE 'STERILITY OF THE ENVIRONMENT'

> Whether the superintendents were good or bad, nothing could change the sterility of the environment.
>
> — Peter Read, *The Stolen Generations* [31]

Peter Read's discussion of the amenities provided at institutions for Aboriginal children is revealing of both the calibre of his historical interpretation and the paucity of his research. He has supported his picture of the bleak environment of the institutions with factual claims that can be easily shown to be untrue.

In his 1999 book, *A Rape of the Soul So Profound*, Read portrayed the New South Wales government as depriving its charges of amenities that almost all other children enjoyed. Discussing the period after 1945, Read claimed the government badly neglected its Aboriginal homes:

> The Board, administratively tucked away in a corner of the Premier's Department, had no influence on the parliament; far away in Kinchela the lack of financial clout was reflected in the absence of basic children's amenities like a swimming pool or gymnasium.[32]

So incensed was Read at this deprivation, he made the same point in a later chapter of the same book:

[30] Retta Long, *In the Way of His Steps: A Brief Outline of Three Decades of History of the Aborigines Inland Mission of Australia*, Aborigines Inland Mission of Australia, Sydney, 1936, Chapter 2: 'The First Decade 1905–1915', see also photograph p 20

[31] Read, *Stolen Generations*, p 11

[32] Peter Read, *A Rape of the Soul so Profound: The Return of the Stolen Generations*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1999, p 36

the Kinchela Home remained without such basic amenities as a swimming pool or basketball court until its closure.[33]

On a number of occasions in his career, Read has boasted of the huge volume of research he has done into the Stolen Generations. In his 1999 book, he said he came to his conclusions 'after reading all the thousands of childcare records of the NSW Aborigines Protection Board'.[34] However, if he had made even a cursory investigation of the most obvious sources, the published annual reports of the Aborigines Protection and Welfare Boards that are available without restriction to anyone, he could never have honestly made his claims about the lack of amenities at Kinchela.

Far from never having a swimming pool and a gymnasium, Kinchela got both those amenities in 1948. The board's annual report of 1947 recorded that 'a swimming pool is nearing completion'; and the 1948 report said the pool was now in operation as well as a gym: 'The boys are encouraged and trained in healthy recreation. A swimming pool has been provided, there is an indoor gymnasium.' In its 1950 annual report, the board published a photograph of boys swimming in the 50 metre, Olympic-size pool, with the caption: 'Champions in the making? The Swimming Pool at Kinchela Home.'[35]

It is worth emphasizing that to have these facilities built for them in the late 1940s — a time of post-war austerity when labour and materials for construction were scarce — the 50 boys at Kinchela were privileged. A swimming pool and gymnasium might seem like 'basic children's amenities' to someone like Read who was educated at the time at the wealthy private school, Knox Grammar, on Sydney's upper north shore, but they were rare everywhere else. No public school anywhere in the state had its own swimming pool. At Canterbury Boys' High School, Sydney, which I attended from 1955 to 1959, the 600 students had no gymnasium until 1956 and no swimming pool then, or since. Indeed, throughout the 1950s the entire Municipality of Canterbury lacked a public swimming pool — the closest was a train trip away at Bankstown. Yet 50 Aboriginal boys at faraway Kinchela got one in 1948. This is something a real historian of this topic could not have failed to notice.

In fact, there was a story behind the Kinchela pool which, had Read ever consulted the records he claimed to, he might have retold himself. In its 1950 annual report, the board explained the motives behind its decision to provide the boys with a pool of their own. It

[33] Read, *Rape of the Soul*, pp153–4
[34] Read, *Rape of the Soul*, p 176
[35] Aborigines Welfare Board, *Report*, 1947, p 8; 1948, p 7; 1950, p 7

acted to openly counter an act of racial discrimination by the local Kempsey Municipal Council. The report recorded:

> THE KEMPSEY BATHS CASE.
>
> The attention of the Board was invited to the alleged refusal on the part of the Kempsey Municipal Council to admit to the Municipal Baths aborigines other than aboriginal children attending high school and in charge of a teacher. The Board was approached by many organisations protesting against the Council's attitude and the matter was the subject of correspondence between the Board, the Council and the Department of Local Government.
>
> In pressing for a review of the Council's attitude, emphasis was placed on the Board's aim to assimilate the aborigines with the white population and the injustice of what appeared to be discrimination against the aborigine children.
>
> Kempsey Municipal Council, however, could not see its way to depart from its decision.[36]

In other words, in the late 1940s the board was still upholding its 60-year-old position of defending its charges against the inequities and prejudices it found in the wider community and other public bodies. In this case, rather than accept the situation after it failed to move the council, the board found the funds to build its wards a pool of their own.

At Cootamundra, the girls did not get a swimming pool, largely because there were no barriers to them using the municipal pool in the township. In summer, they went there regularly and also competed in local swimming carnivals.[37] Since 1925, the home had a tennis court where girls learnt the game. They also played tennis at the public school they attended in Cootamundra. The grounds of the home had swings and other play equipment.[38]

One of Read's other complaints about the institutions was that they trained young people to be farm workers and domestic servants, positions which he regarded as demeaning. He condemned their managers for failing to give boys or girls opportunities to follow more satisfying occupations such as music:

> Talent was ignored. One boy was noted by the Kinchela manager to 'enjoy sitting by himself for hours playing the mouth organ'. There was no thought of a possible musical career.[39]

[36] Aborigines Welfare Board, *Report*, 1950, p 7

[37] Aborigines Welfare Board, *Report*, 1949, p 7

[38] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report*, 1925–26, p 2; Aborigines Welfare Board, *Report*, 1947, p 9; Kabaila, *Cootamundra: The Aboriginal Girls Home*, p 26

[39] Read, *Stolen Generations*, p 12

The great majority of white children, however, were subject to similar strictures. In New South Wales public primary schools in the first half of the twentieth century, music was part of the basic curriculum for all children, white and black, but was largely confined to group singing. White parents who wanted their children to learn an instrument had to buy it themselves and engage a private teacher. At a number of public schools, though, the local Parents and Citizens Associations did raise funds from the local community to buy pianos and other instruments.

At the Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls' Home the matrons followed much the same practice. The girls' choir performed at annual concerts in the town. Combined with an annual bazaar, these concerts raised enough money by 1924 to buy the home a piano, a gramophone and, later, a combined radio-gramophone set. In the 1940s, the Cootamundra girls went by bus to the town's picture theatre every Saturday.[40]

In the period Read was discussing, Kinchela provided its boys with similar amenities, with indoor recreation listed as 'the radio, the library, boxing, concerts and community singing', but they also had a more exciting option. They had their own cinema projector. The home's manager made arrangements with the offices of MGM and Columbia Pictures in Sydney to send them a regular supply of feature films.[41]

In short, almost everything Read has written about the lack of amenities at these homes is false, and displays little familiarity with the historical sources of the nature of the institutions.

MAKING CHILDREN ASHAMED TO BE ABORIGINAL

> Several girls remember the staff telling them 'don't hang your heads, stand up straight'. It was only as adults that they realized that it was the staff themselves who, perhaps unconsciously, had taught the children to hang their heads in shame at their very existence.
>
> — Peter Read on the Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls' Home [42]

This statement is another example of how Read has constructed the evidence to indict welfare officials. There is no doubt that Aboriginal girls at Cootamundra were told to stand up straight and not hang their heads. Coral Edwards recalled:

[40] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report*, 1923–24, p 1; Aborigines Welfare Board, *Report*, 1947, p 9; 1948, p 8

[41] Aborigines Welfare Board, *Report*, 1947 p 8; 1948, p 7

[42] Read, *Rape of the Soul*, p 35

> All my memories of the Home is feeling shame because we were Aboriginal. Hanging your head when you walked down to school, and shuffling your feet when you were spoken to outside the Church by someone. And then getting' roared at when you went back to the Home because you hung your head.[43]

But none of this was exclusive to Aborigines. All Australian children who grew up in the 1940s and 1950s had the same words ringing in their ears most days of the week as teachers and principals struggled to get them to not only overcome their natural childhood shyness and deference to adults, but also to get their attention at school assemblies. Children were also told to hold their heads up when teachers sought to make them march upright from assembly hall and playground to classroom. If any child of that period, white or black, misbehaved and was being admonished by a teacher, the very same words were often the first used. The racist spin put by Read and Edwards on the familiar instructions to all schoolchildren of the period is another indicator of their embellishment of the evidence.

As I recorded in Chapter One, one of Read's principal accusations in this debate is that the staff of the Cootamundra and Kinchela homes indoctrinated their charges with the view that blacks on reserves were 'dirty, untrustworthy and bad'. They allegedly sought to make the children became ashamed of being Aboriginal. To put this allegation in its context of its times, let me quote a long but telling passage recorded by Merryl-Leigh Brindley in her thesis on the Cootamundra home. It comes from an interview with Mrs Ella Hiscocks who was matron there from 1945 to 1967. Recorded in 1993, it gives a balanced view of the subject and, indeed, speaks for itself.

> *Did you encourage them to be proud of being Aboriginal?* To be honest, dear, we never thought much about it. To me they were children who needed care, black or white, they were all the same. It wasn't the same then as it is now with all this publicity — people claiming to be Aboriginal as white as you and I are. Not too many people claimed to be Aboriginal then, I can tell you. Coral started this organization — yes, Link-Up, that's what it was called — so they could go back and find their families. Trouble was, they'd grown apart — had different ideas, different values. One girl went to see her family and wrote back to me to tell her sisters not to go back whatever they did. I don't think anybody who'd not actually been on the reserves could imagine how bad the conditions were. And the terrible trouble that drink caused. It was the drinking that broke up families more than anybody — when the mothers drank, that was the end for the kiddies.
>
> *Do you think they grew up ashamed of being Aboriginal?* Yes I think they probably did. People used to call them names — at school, even the staff

[43] Deveson, *Faces of Change*, p 99

> sometimes — 'black this or that' — or nigger. They didn't in my hearing, I can tell you, but I've heard since they did — girls who've come back to visit have told me. We certainly didn't try to turn them against their race but we wanted them to fit in the white world, so we had to teach them white ways, dear. That was the policy then — assimilation, they called it. Give them a better chance in life. Quite a lot of the girls married white men and we thought they'd be better off then — not the hardship their parents had gone through. Terrible poverty, no chance of a decent job, looked down on. The reserves should have been closed, but they weren't, so we picked up the pieces. You just have to fix up living conditions first — how can you be proud of who you are if you live in a dump?[44]

THE DISCIPLINARY REGIME

One of the other complaints made in some of the oral history interviews recorded by historians is about the harshness of the discipline, especially at Cootamundra. But again, this is exaggerated by these informants and also fails to take into account the fact that at the time discipline among children, whatever their racial background, was seen as a positive value. It was not something exclusive to welfare homes for Aborigines. All educational institutions tried to instill discipline into children. They were, of course, right to do so. Whatever their colour, children need to develop a sense of personal discipline if they are to learn their school lessons and eventually make their way independently in the adult world. Some of the former inmates who have complained about this to interviewers would have complained about *any* attempt to discipline them. One woman who was in Cootamundra in the 1930s told Brindley:

> Sometimes had extra work to do too. We kept that home going I can tell you. Some of the staff at you and at you — couldn't see the point busting yourself having it all so clean. Never let up, some of them. But I tell you I didn't know I was living till I got my first job. Made the home like heaven. Didn't want to stay on at school — didn't want to do nothing really.[45]

Another woman who was at Cootamundra in the 1920s made it clear she would have been dissatisfied with any instruction from her teachers:

> They cut off my hair. Said I had nits. Bloody lie. Used to make big girls scrub us till swear skin was dropping off. Clothes — too damn many. Starched, rubbed our skin. Boots. Hadn't been used to wearing boots — always in strife, clothes on every which way. Boots on wrong bloody feet. Polished till you could see your face in them. Matron used to spit on them — make you do it again. Never bloody well stopped. Do this, do

[44] Brindley, The Home on the Hill, p 125
[45] Brindley, The Home on the Hill, p 165

> that, day in, day out. Get in lines, march here, march there. Marched to breakfast, even. Like a bloody army. Scrub the floor before breakfast, where we slept. Make your bed. Even scrubbed the bloody bricks outside. Kept us warm, I suppose. Bloody cold in winter, freezing — chilblains, got chilblains even on my ears ... Bloody school — hated school. Used to pinch stuff from kitchen and put up me bloomers — eat it in school. Got into trouble. Glad when I finished — glad.[46]

Some of the girls who complained later recognized the need for the kind of regime that was in place:

> I understand more now, why it was the way it was. When my kids were young I was hard put to get them ready for school on time and I only had three. Getting them ready to go out anywhere was a bit of a circus. Now up there there were forty kids to get organised. I can now see why there had to be so many rules. We used to jib about cleaning our shoes when we got home from school — we wanted to go out and play. In fact we used to bribe the younger girls with our fruit to clean the shoes. But I can see it was one less job to do in the morning. When I read what she says I understand more.
>
> But — I still think it was too rigid. Matron says the staff checked the work. That's right — they checked it and if it wasn't right, according to them, you bloody well did it again — and again and again. Matron sort of kept aloof from the staff — they supervised your work and they corrected you. She stuck by the rules but I have to say she was fair.[47]

Some of the Cootamundra staff agreed that the discipline was overdone, although their comments need to be read in light of the staff's internal relationships. Ern Gardiner, caretaker at Cootamundra from 1955 to 1976, did not approve of the regime of Matron Ella Hiscocks:

> She was a despot in the full sense of the word. She was a schoolteacher married to a policeman who'd died of appendicitis. She was a schoolteacher first — she only knew how to teach kiddies — she had no idea of institutional management. She ran the place like an army camp and she was like the general in charge. Yet you can't really blame her for the sternness and rigidity — she was doing the thing that was right in that era. I got on all right with her most of the time.[48]

Matron Hiscocks, however, would have been little troubled by these comments since she had a low opinion of the commitment Gardiner himself made to the work ethic.

> He was so lazy — always hiding behind the wood pile. He'd gossip to the girls out there which I didn't like. His wife, though, was wonderful with

[46] Brindley, The Home on the Hill, p 167
[47] Brindley, The Home on the Hill, p 115
[48] Brindley, The Home on the Hill, p 148

> the girls. He was supposed to keep us in vegies and so on but he just let the garden go.[49]

This discussion, I realize, is dragging out what must appear an increasingly trivial issue. Anyone who went to school in Australia, or spent some time in almost any kind of public institution for children in the previous century, will be familiar with the same kind of grievances. What seems authoritarian and mindless discipline to many children, especially adolescents in their mid-teens, becomes understandable to many later in life, especially if they join the teaching profession themselves. But we should keep in mind that it is charges of this pathetic standard, made by interested parties, that historians at our leading universities, aided and abetted by journalists in our broadsheet press and current affairs television programs, and sanctioned by this country's Human Rights Commission, have deployed against the people who ran institutions for Aboriginal children. Although the evidence brought by their accusers is so feeble, the charges are serious. In Peter Read's words, some of the managers were 'psychopaths' and 'monsters'. Other writers have publicly compared these institutions to the Nazi death camps of World War II.

PUNISHMENT AND DEATH AT COOTAMUNDRA

> 'Mum remembered once a girl who did not move too quick, She was tied to the old bell post and belted continuously. She died that night, still tied to the post. No girl ever knew what happened to her body or where she was buried'.
>
> Auschwitz? Belsen? Dachau? No, Cootamundra.
>
> The words are those of Jennifer who was among 535 indigenous people who gave evidence to the Human Rights Commission's inquiry into the removal of Aboriginal children from their families during 11 months of gruelling hearings.
>
> — Debra Jopson, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 May 1997[50]

The *Bringing Them Home* report did enormous damage to the reputations of all those people, white and black, who had worked in Aboriginal child welfare throughout the twentieth century. The media had a field day in reporting the horrors the report exposed. According to the *Canberra Times*, the Human Rights Commission's inquiry 'uncovered horrendous abuse of children by churches, foster parents and government authorities'.[51]

Most of the examples given in the press of these abuses came from submissions and personal testimonies. Reporters never told their read-

[49] Brindley, The Home on the Hill, p 113
[50] Deborah Jopson, from Human Rights Commission media analysis, p 67
[51] Kim Sweetman, *Canberra Times*, 21 May 1997, p 29

ers that these claims were untested by the Human Rights Commission. It never tried to verify their claims by research into the welfare files of those who made them. It never cross-examined those who made these claims. It uncritically accepted hearsay — more accurately, malicious gossip — long removed from the source of the allegations.

For instance, the story told by Jennifer about the girl tied up and beaten to death at Cootamundra, which Debra Jopson reported so luridly in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, should never have been given the imprimatur of approval by an official government inquiry. Jennifer's story was about events that occurred sometime between 1915 and 1920, that is, long before she was born. She said she had been told it by her mother.[52]

It is certainly true that a number of girls admitted to Cootamundra in the 1910s and 1920s did die, but all suffered from tuberculosis or another infectious disease. They were invariably transferred to the local Cootamundra Hospital or one of the state's tuberculosis sanatoriums before their demise, and their deaths were all duly recorded in the Ward Registers. No girls was ever recorded, however, as having have died from physical violence.

Had the incident recounted by Jennifer really occurred, it would have been a terrible crime that would have been impossible to keep quiet. Someone on the staff or some of girls at the time would surely have leaked it to the police or to one of their confidants. Yet they never did. No one ever mentioned it at the time or later in any written or oral memoir about the home. It did not find its way into any of the archival documents, or else it would certainly have been reported by Peter Read, who assures us he examined them all. Margaret Tucker never told this story either, even though she was at Cootamundra in 1917, and two of her sisters were there in 1920. Tucker later became a Communist Party activist and wrote an influential autobiography in which she tried to portray both the home and the removal policy in as bad a light as possible, yet she was apparently ignorant of the biggest scandal of them all that occurred virtually under her nose. Coral Edwards lived at the home from infancy in the mid-1940s to her teenage years, that is, probably longer than any other girl, and she never heard this story either, so it was obviously not part of the folk memory of the home. Had she had any inkling of it, Edwards would almost certainly have retold the story, since her bitterness about her upbringing gave her ample motives to do so. Apart from Jennifer, no one else ever seems to have heard of it.

[52] *Bringing Them Home*, pp 52–3

On these grounds alone, Ronald Wilson and the Human Rights Commission should not have taken this submission seriously. Indeed, in publishing it they have criminally defamed the matron of Cootamundra at the time, Miss Emmeline Rutter, a devout Christian who devoted many years of her life to the Aborigines as a teacher at Burnt Bridge Station, as matron at both Warangesda and Cootamundra and, in the 1920s, as one of the board's home-finders for apprenticed girls.[53] She is long dead, of course, and can do nothing herself to rescue her reputation, and Wilson is now dead, too. But it is not hard to imagine how incensed Wilson's descendants would be if he were similarly accused, on the basis of such dubious evidence, of permitting and then covering up the murder of one of the children at Sister Kate's home for Aboriginal children in Perth when he was that home's chairman.

Apart from her story about the girl beaten to death, Jennifer was also an unreliable witness about the discipline and punishment regime at the Cootamundra home when she was there in the 1950s.

> Some of the staff were cruel to the girls. Punishment was caning or belting and being locked in the box-room or the old morgue. Matron had her pets and so did some of the staff. I look back now and see we were all herded together like sheep and each had to defend themselves and if you didn't you would be picked on by somebody that didn't like you, your life would be made a misery.[54]

Similar claims were made by other disaffected former inmates in Anne Deveson's 1983 ABC television program on the Cootamundra home. They said management tried to terrify disobedient girls by locking them in solitary confinement in the room known as 'the morgue' because it had been one in the old hospital. A second room, known as the 'box room', was also used for solitary confinement.

> Lola: ... where they used to store all the canned goods, dry goods and that, was the Morgue, and the name stuck. That was where we were locked up when we really misbehaved ourselves. But we didn't mind because they had all the dry goods, all the biscuits and the cookies and, ah, the sweets. I was pretty young when I first got locked up.
>
> Coral: The association of the word 'morgue' and being locked up in a morgue. That's just (breathes), you know.[55]

The matron at the time, Ella Hiscocks, lived long enough to respond to these accusations. She did not get any right of reply on the ABC, let alone the Human Rights Commission, of course, but her side of

[53] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report*, 1913, p 3
[54] *Bringing Them Home*, p 54
[55] Deveson, *Faces of Change*, p 100

things was recorded in Merryl-Leigh Brindley's MA thesis. Hiscocks said that while some girls were sent to the box room, the claim in the Deveson program that they were confined in the old morgue was a 'wicked lie'. She also disputed the claim by Jennifer that girls in the 1950s were punished by 'caning' or 'belting' and showed Brindley the policy manual that forbade the only other staff member in charge of the girls, the assistant matron, from administering corporal punishment.

> How were they punished, dear? Well, if they were doing wrong I would give the child a slap, just as any mother would give a slap there and then. They would be denied TV but we did not have corporal punishment. When I arrived there was a strap hanging in the office — I don't know whether previous matrons had used it but I certainly didn't.
>
> If they did something really bad — odd occasions one would run away, or steal or that, they would be shut in the box-room to think it over. It's a wicked lie to say they were shut in the morgue. That was my 'shop' where I kept all my supplies. If they were shut in the box-room they used to throw everything around — that's why that was the last resort — they made such a mess. I'd never shut them in my shop — imagine what they'd do to the stores! I wouldn't have been so stupid. I can't answer for the other staff of course — some of them may have hit the girls but they signed a form when they came that said no corporal punishment. This was paragraph (3) in the statement of duties:
>
> > *(3) exercise such discipline as is necessary for the well-being of the children of the Home generally. It must be understood that the discipline must be firm but kindly. Under no circumstances is the Assistant-Matron allowed to administer corporal punishment to a child inmate of the Home. All cases requiring correction must be reported to the Principal who will take whatever action is considered by her to be necessary.*
>
> When we got TV the best punishment was to stop them watching it. Before that we occasionally sent them to the box-room — you couldn't send them to their rooms if they were naughty because they were open dormitories. It's easy to criticize but people have problems disciplining three of four children — I had over forty. You just had to be firm and have rules and stick to them or we'd never been able to manage. Just like a boarding school I suppose — you have to have a routine.[56]

No one familiar with the kind of discipline and punishment that prevailed from the 1940s to the 1960s in both public and private schools in Australia will find any of this unusual or especially oppressive.

In the entire history of the Cootamundra home, only one credible charge of physical violence was ever made about it.[57] In 1928, a for-

[56] Brindley, The Home on the Hill, pp 112–3

[57] A second incident was recorded by Peter Read in his oral history, *Down There With Me on the Cowra Mission*, but it is hard to take seriously. One of

mer employee of the home wrote to the Aborigines Protection Board with a complaint of this kind. Peter Read provided his version of this accusation in his book *A Rape of the Soul So Profound*:

> In 1927 [*sic*] Mrs Curry, a former employee of the Cootamundra Girls Home, alleged that girls had been flogged by staff, slashed with a cane across the shoulders and generally treated with undue severity and lack of sympathy. The use of the cane, she alleged, was a daily occurrence. The report was not acted upon due to 'a lack of corroborative evidence'.[58]

The actual sequence of events was that Mrs Curry wrote to the board and it ordered an investigation by its inspector A. W. Green. The report by Green was considered by a board meeting in April 1828, though the details of what he said were not recorded. On the basis of his report, the board decided:

> In event of further inquiry by Mrs Curry inform her that her allegations were thoroughly investigated and found to be baseless.[59]

Nonetheless, the board subsequently invited Mrs Curry to come to Sydney to address it in person. The minutes recorded the meeting as follows:

> Upon being received by the Board Mrs Curry was invited by the Chairman to amplify her written complaints by any verbal statement she might wish to make. This she did by reading extracts from letters written by her to her husband while at the Home. She also alleged that the children were 'flogged', slashed with a cane across the shoulders, and generally treated with undue severity and lack of sympathy, the use of the cane being a daily occurrence.
>
> Mrs Curry stated that she had had no experience of Institution work & having arrived from England only thirteen months ago had not previously been in contact with Aborigines apart from three months in Bomaderry Home, where she was engaged in serving duties.

his interviewees, Aileen Wedge, claimed that while she was at Cootamundra at some unspecified time in the 1950s one of the staff 'used to hit the big girls, and they [she] ended up breaking a girl's back with a brick. Her name was Mrs Prosser [fictitious name]' (p 101). The square brackets here are Read's. The fact that he resorted to a fictitious name means he had no real evidence for the charge he published. In the interview, Aileen Wedge told how she spent much of her adult life in mental asylums and institutions for uncontrollable children. She was not a witness that anyone but Read could treat seriously.

[58] Read, *Rape of the Soul*, pp 152 and 224 n 8. Read wrongly sources this allegation to the minutes of the Aborigines Protection Board on 27 February 1927. It was actually discussed in the board's minutes of 18 May 1928 and 27 July 1928.

[59] Aborigines Protection Board, Minutes, 18 May 1928

> After a thorough questioning by the members the Chairman informed Mrs Curry that as her statements lacked corroboration they must be regarded as unfounded and unjust. Mrs Curry then withdrew.[60]

Now, at this distance in time and, given the reputation which institutions for children have today, most readers of the evidence presented here, which is all we have to go on, would probably side with Mrs Curry. The board and its inspector seemed to be looking for reasons to dismiss her complaint and did not even consider her motivation, even though she apparently had nothing to gain from acting as whistle blower. It is difficult to dismiss her concerns. There probably *was* a disciplinary regime in place at the time that involved physical punishment through the regular use of the cane.

However, even though the Aborigines Protection Board might seem here to be overly concerned about defending its officers, it plainly did not approve of the kind of practices Mrs Curry alleged. Moreover, it took seriously enough the word of a woman who was only a servant to order an investigation into her charge and to interview her in person.

It s also worth repeating that this was the only credible charge of such practices made in the entire lifetime of this institution. The plausible oral history of later periods, from the 1930s to the 1950s, does not mention any undue physical violence and its use was expressly forbidden by the regulations.

Hence, none of this justifies the hyperbole that Peter Read deploys in *The Stolen Generations* about institutional life for Aboriginal children. Since corporal punishment was the normal experience of disobedient white children throughout the entire first half of the twentieth century, when it was practised on a daily basis in public schools throughout the state, Mrs Curry's descriptions of what took place at Cootamundra does not make its administrators in the late 1920s abnormal, let alone warrant Read's terms of 'psychopaths' and 'monsters'. His description of the home's approach to discipline as 'barbaric in its execution and indefensible in its intent'[61] is ludicrous. The most appropriate analogy for the Cootamundra home is not a Nazi death camp but a typical country boarding school for girls.

COMPLAINTS ABOUT BOMADERRY CHILDREN'S HOME IN 1934

The records of the Aborigines Protection Board contain only one serious complaint about the treatment of children at the Bomaderry Children's Home. This occurred in 1934 but there are no details of what actually happened. The board's minutes in July that year

[60] Aborigines Protection Board, Minutes, 27 July 1928

[61] See the quotation that opens this chapter.

referred merely to 'statements made by boys who are ex-inmates thereof'.

The board's vice-chairman and the Chief Inspector of Schools in the Department of Public Instruction, B. C. Harkness, agreed to inspect the home 'at an early date' and report back to the board. This he did in November that year. His report has not survived but the board's minutes record that it decided to: 'Ask local police to make inspections of Home at irregular intervals and to furnish quarterly reports thereon'.[62] In other words, although no action was recommended against the home or any of its officers, there seemed to be enough evidence of some kind of problem to warrant monitoring by the police.

PUNISHMENT AND SEXUAL ABUSE AT KINCHELA

The Kinchela Aboriginal Boys Home, according to Read, was the most brutal of the Aboriginal child welfare institutions in New South Wales. Both Read and Coral Edwards have told stories about boys there being tied up, flogged and locked away for punishment. In her 1983 interview on ABC Television, Edwards said:

> In Kinchela they used to tie the boys to the fences and flog them with a horsewhip, a bullwhip. And lock them in sheds for punishment for a week, just to eat the hay and water. They used to live just on that.[63]

Read made the institution notorious in his 1981 pamphlet, *The Stolen Generations*, where he wrote:

> Another [man] in 1981 had scars on his feet, which he received forty years ago from frostbite, bringing in the cows, without shoes, on winter mornings before dawn.[64]

Both kinds of stories have been repeated in several of this duo's publications ever since.[65] Some of their claims are so inherently implausible that no one should take them seriously. While some boys at Kinchela certainly were rostered to round up cows before dawn, and most usually went about with bare feet (like many white country boys at the time), to suggest any of them ever got frostbite there is fanciful.

[62] Aborigines Protection Board, Minutes, 6 July 1934, 16 November 1934
[63] Coral Edwards interviewed by Anne Deveson, *Faces of Change*, p 98
[64] Read, *Stolen Generations*, p 11
[65] Link-Up (NSW) and Tikka Jan Wilson, *In the Best Interests of the Child? Stolen Children: Aboriginal Pain/White Shame*, Aboriginal History Monograph 4, Australian National University, Canberra, 1977, pp 71–2; Read, *Rape of the Soul*, p 153; Peter Read, 'Don't Turn Your Back on Me: A Bibliographical Review of the Literature of the Stolen Generations', *Aboriginal Law Bulletin*, 1995

Kinchela is on the mid-north coast of New South Wales, on the lower reaches of the Macleay River, not far from the beachside tourist town of South West Rocks. It is a short distance from the ocean and virtually at sea level. The climate is sub-tropical. The notion that this location could have had a frost heavy enough to cause frostbite is risible. In more recent years, Read has upped the horror quotient of his tales:

> hardly anyone from the New South Wales Kinchela Boys Home reached the age of fifty-five.[66]

> so savage were the conditions at the Kinchela Boys Home in New South Wales that very few people of the severely traumatized inmates have been able to talk about their experience at all.[67]

These claims have no plausibility either. Read has not examined the life histories of enough ex-Kinchela inmates to know the ages at which they died. Neither he nor anyone else has the data on how many of them lived to what ages. Nor can he say with any authority what proportion were so traumatized they were left speechless by their experiences. Indeed, there is good evidence to show that this is another of his exaggerations.

In September 2002, former inmates Herb Simms and Ray Winnicom organized a reunion of old boys at the home. More than 50 attended. Some of them had been residents there in the 1930s so, like Simms, were then aged in their mid-70s or more, thus living twenty years longer than Read claimed possible. At least ten of the men who attended were sufficiently non-traumatized to give interviews to reporters from *The Australian*, the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the Channel Seven program *Sunday Sunrise*.[68]

Because the reunion was sponsored by the activist body Reconciliation Australia, it dwelt on the negative side of the boys' experiences at Kinchela. The media coverage declined to look at any positive outcomes, such as the successful careers some of the boys had as adults. Readers and viewers were not told, for instance, that Herb Simms spent most of his adult life as a tradesman in the automotive industry, nor that between 1968 and 1970 he actually became the manager of the Kinchela home. After it closed, Simms became liaison officer of the Aboriginal Welfare division of the New South Wales

[66] Peter Read, 'Clio or Janus? Historians and the Stolen Generations', *Australian Historical Studies*, 118, 33, 2002, p 57

[67] Read, 'Don't Turn Your Back on Me'

[68] Matthew Denholm, 'Reunion a Return to Cruel, Painful Past', *The Australian*, 5 September 2002, p 5; Debra Jopson, 'Journey Into the Past', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 September 2002, p 11; John Collis, *Sunday Sunrise*, Channel Seven network, 29 September 2002

Department of Child Welfare and Social Welfare.[69] Another man at the reunion, George Rose, who was at Kinchela from 1935 to 1937, became a well-known figure on the political Left as a trade union organizer and Communist Party activist. He was also the manager of the New South Wales Aboriginal Legal Service for 24 years, the chairman of several land councils, and a councillor of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission.[70] These were not the careers of men the institution crippled for life.

I can also offer some anecdotal evidence that counters Read's wholesale condemnation. In 1989 and 1990 I visited Kinchela several times to evaluate a New South Wales government labour market program run by the boys home's successor, Bennelong's Haven, then a drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre for Aborigines. One day when I was there, three middle-aged Aboriginal men drove up in two tradesmen's vans. They told the superintendent they had been residents in their youth and asked if they could look around. They were engaged on a nearby construction site and had decided to drop in for a nostalgic visit. They walked about the buildings and grounds apparently enjoying themselves hugely, pointing out to one another various aspects of the place, laughing and joking all the time. They were anything but traumatized or speechless.[71]

As at Cootamundra, the historians of Kinchela have been able to discover only one case of excessive punishment on which to hitch their allegations of unrelieved brutality. In at least three publications, Peter Read has discussed an inquiry held into the management of Kinchela in 1935.[72] The superintendent of the home, A. J. McQuiggan, faced charges that he was often drunk, that he punished the boys too harshly, and that he was in debt to local tradespeople. The Aborigines Protection Board took these charges seriously enough to order an investigation. In fact, when the chairman of the board, the New South Wales Police Commissioner William Mackay, heard the accusations he acted immediately.

[69] Interview with John Maynard for National Library of Australia oral history project, http://protocat.nla.gov.au/Record/950973

[70] Philip Cornford, 'Proud People Reborn', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 May 2007

[71] There are other examples in print which Read could not have missed, had he ever looked. For instance, see the full-page story of John Bugmy, a boy who received his entire formal education at Kinchela: 'Former Kinchela Boy Joins Staff of Chief Secretary's Department', *Dawn*, Aborigines Welfare Board, September, 1963, p 7

[72] Read, *Stolen Generations*, p 11 (here he wrongly dates the charges to 1933); Read, *Rape of the Soul*, pp 153, 224 n 11; Link-Up, *In the Best Interests of the Child?*, pp 71–2

> The information came to me on a Saturday morning that this was taking place, and I there and then arranged for the men to hold an inquiry to leave on Sunday night's train, and preliminary enquiries made on the Monday, and enquiry to open on Tuesday. I believe that if a thing is to be investigated and justice applied, it must be speedy. [73]

The resulting police report has not survived in the records but the board's minutes recorded its own recommendations based closely on what the police officers found.

> Recommendation (1). That the Manager Mr McQuiggan be strongly advised to give up taking intoxicating liquor altogether, particularly against drinking when he has any of the boys of the Home in his company, (additional) and that he be warned that if there are any further breaches or reports against him on account of drink, his services will be immediately be dispensed with.
>
> Recommendation (2). That he be advised to make some reasonable effort to meet his liabilities without further delay, (additional) and that a statement be obtained in three months' time setting out what effort he had made, and what he proposes to do.
>
> Recommendation (3). That he be informed that on no account must he tie a boy up to a fence or tree, or anything else of that nature, to inflict punishment upon him.
>
> Recommendation (4). That such instruments as lengths of hose pipe or a stockwhip must not be used in chastising a boy.
>
> Recommendation (5). The following be substituted: – That the form of corporal punishment used in Public Schools be the form to be used in the Home.
>
> Recommendation (6). The following be substituted: – No dietary punishment shall be inflicted on any inmate in the Home.
>
> Recommendation (7). That a Punishment Register be kept at the home, and a true record kept of every punishment inflicted on a boy, showing the offence for which he is punished, the number of strokes given, and the instrument of chastisement used.
>
> Recommendation (8). To be eliminated: – The practice of loaning boys to farmers is disapproved.[74]

In other words, the board confirmed the charges. McQuiggan did drink on the job, was overly indebted, and his punishment of the boys went beyond what was accepted at the time. He whipped at least one boy while he was tied to a fence, another while tied to a tree, and he used a hose pipe and a stockwhip on them instead of the

[73] Aborigines Protection Board, Minutes, 4 March 1936
[74] Aborigines Protection Board, Minutes, 4 December 1935

familiar school cane. He had also apparently withheld food as a punishment, though nothing in the records confirms the allegation of Read and Edwards that this amounted to locking a boy in a shed for a week on a diet of hay and water.

Although it approved these recommendations, the board was still divided on what it should do about McQuiggan. He had been appointed by the board but was actually employed as the teacher of the Kinchela Aboriginal School by the Department of Education. At the time, the Chief Inspector of Schools in that department, B. C. Harkness, was also the vice-chairman of the Aborigines Protection Board. He subsequently defended McQuiggan, suggesting that the charges had been trumped up by his disgruntled predecessor. To a later board meeting, Harkness read two letters from the local school inspector who put McQuiggan's management in a different light. The letters said:

> Those responsible for the enquiry had overlooked the possibility that as a regular visitor to the Institution I could have assisted in the proceedings. I gathered that two matters in question were sobriety and discipline. In all I made 6 visits to the Institution, 2 official, and 4 unofficial, and in each case the visit was unannounced. The unofficial visits were made to show some visitor what the Aborigines Protection Board is doing. At no time was there any indication of insobriety, and always evidence of complete organisation and control. The impressions which the frequent visitor to the Home must get are the oversight, initiative, etc., of the Manager, the real devotion of the Superintendent and his wife, and the contentedness of the boys. I was bound to say that during the short stay I had at South West Rocks the wife of Mr McQuiggan's predecessor, who was dismissed for insobriety, made a definite attempt to place Mr and Mrs McQuiggan in a bad light, and apparently loses no opportunity of doing so.
>
> In connection with Mr McQuiggan's case I have to say a few words. On a visit I found the lads about to take part in a meal. The cleanliness and routine left nothing to be desired. During Christmas vacation Mr and Mrs McQuiggan go to very great inconvenience. Local authorities set aside an area to enable a camp to be held, supplied gramophones and a large selection of records. With the aid of the instruments the way these boys behave when compared with other boys are a credit to Mr and Mrs McQuiggan. The Local District Show Committee allows free entry to the Agricultural Show. The boys have the best Manager and Matron for their welfare.[75]

Harkness concluded his case by stating that, even though he thought McQuiggan should be suspended until the Public Service Board had considered his case, he had seen him at work and thought him 'an excellent man … a fine happy man'.

[75] Aborigines Protection Board, Minutes, 4 March 1936

I am presenting this defence in such detail not out of some attempt to exonerate McQuiggan but to show that, like the matrons at Cootamundra, to give him Read's labels of 'psychopath' and 'monster' is to exaggerate greatly. Some of those on the board had reasons to think highly of him. Similarly, to talk of his use of a stockwhip and hose pipe as if this was part of the normal disciplinary regime at Kinchela is to falsify the story. When the board heard talk of such practices, it was alarmed. Its chairman responded immediately and instigated a police investigation. Activists like Read and Edwards who describe these punishments as routine and customary should not be believed.

In the event, McQuiggan was reinstated by the Department of Education and continued his employment on Aboriginal stations after he and his wife were transferred to Cumeroogunga. At Kinchela, future managers were required to establish a punishment book in which they recorded any corporal punishment dealt out to inmates. This was confined to the use of a school-issue cane to boys' hands. The Punishment Book from 1952 to 1962 survives in the archives and shows that the boys then were subject to corporal punishment that, if anything, was much lighter than that normally given to white boys at public schools in New South Wales at the same time. Of course, it is quite possible — probably quite likely — that the punishment book did not record all punishments. Given the likelihood of the board's disapproval of severe punishment, those in charge at Kinchela would have had an incentive to make their regime seem mild as possible. Hence, in publishing the statistics here I am not endorsing them as entirely reliable. Nonetheless, they do not tell a story that fits the usual version.

Of the 85 boys at the school from 1952 to 1962, only 29 were ever caned. They committed 51 offences for which they received a total of 126 strokes, an average of 2.5 strokes of the cane for each offence. Over ten years, only two boys were given six strokes.[76] In my experience, and those of friends at New South Wales state secondary schools in the 1950s and 60s, white schoolboys were caned more frequently and much more severely each time than this. Even if we multiplied the figures in the punishment book by a factor of three, the Kinchela boys still got off lightly.

Indeed, in light of some recent revelations, it seems that even at the height of the McQuiggan regime, the boys at Kinchela were also

[76] Beverley and Don Elphick, *Kinchela Aboriginal Home and School: Alphabetical Index of Students*, Canberra, 1997. This publication lists all 341 boys in the Kinchela Aboriginal School Admissions from 1923 to 1962 (in NSW State Archives File no. 1/9814) and those who were recorded in the Punishment Book from 1952 to 1962 (NSW State Archives File no. 1/9813).

treated much more gently than those attending private boarding schools for white children in the 1960s and 1970s. In May 2008, the Minister for Finance in the Rudd Labor government, Lindsay Tanner, described in a newspaper interview the regular beatings he endured as a boarder from age 11 at the Church of England Gippsland Grammar school in rural Victoria. Tanner said he was caned until 'there were five-inch bruises on my buttocks, sometimes drawing blood' for crimes such as wearing the wrong running shoes or being caught reading in bed at night with a torch. He said the house master usually did the beatings but on occasions it was the headmaster.

> It was nasty, unfair, erratic, it made me angry then. I was smitten with the unfairness of life. You're not in control, you feel powerless having to live with endless arbitrary rules and brutality. But I didn't show my feelings. I learned to hide the damage. I toughened up. I hated my time there but it did forge my character.[77]

None of his means, of course, that the corporal punishment administered to Aboriginal boys at Kinchela was right, but it does prove it was not racist. The same things, and worse, were routinely administered to white children, especially those privileged enough to attend private boarding schools. The comments by Tanner also question Read's assertion that the Kinchela regime reduced all its boys to shambling wrecks. Aboriginal boys do not have a different human nature to white boys. Like Tanner, there must have been some who, rather than rendered helpless victims, found the experience at Kinchela toughened them up and forged their character.

Today, anyone who reads the newspapers will be well aware that almost all institutions for young males house some kind of sexual scandal in their history. Many such institutions have inadvertently employed a small proportion of staff who turned out to be homosexual pederasts. Most boarding schools and disciplinary institutions for children and teenagers, irrespective of the social status, religion or ethnicity of their charges, have suffered this problem. Even though this issue at Kinchela was never discussed publicly and no formal policy was ever endorsed, for most of its history the home deliberately employed a married couple as managers and teachers in the school. As we are also sadly aware today, this practice still provided no absolute guarantee that the boys would not be molested, though it should have at least reduced its likelihood. In fact, this appears to have been the case. Despite all the attempts by activists to vilify this institution, no one, as far as I can determine, has ever made an allegation that a

[77] Ruth Ostrow, 'Lindsay Tanner says he was beaten at school', *The Australian*, 3 May, 2008

member of the Kinchela staff ever sexually abused any of the boys there.

Nonetheless, the boys did not entirely escape sexual molestation. A number of charges were made over the years about what was sometimes called 'sexual deviance', and more recently homosexual rape of boys by other boys. In *The Stolen Generations*, Read said that in the late 1930s the Aborigines Protection Board commissioned an inquiry into 'sexual deviance' at Kinchela. Read said an inspector from the Child Welfare Department argued the problem arose from the prevailing environment. The boys were bored because they did not have enough work to perform each day.[78] I could not confirm this in the records, but I do not doubt its truth. In the board's minutes, there are oblique references in 1939 to an unnamed inquiry then underway by the Child Welfare Department, and whose unmentionable nature would seem to fit Read's account. However, the child welfare inspector's report does not appear to have survived in the archives, or at least not in those I was permitted to read. In another book, *A Rape of the Soul So Profound*, Read briefly mentions an Aboriginal Welfare Board inquiry in 1962 into 'alleged sexual perversion at the Home'.[79] The file that contains this information is not available for public access but we can be confident that, had he found that any of the Kinchela staff had been accused, Read would have milked the information for all it was worth.

In 2002, during a television interview at a reunion at Kinchela, one of the former inmates told Channel Seven reporter John Collis that in the 1930s some of the older boys had raped him. He indicated he was not the only one and that older boys often took advantage of those younger and weaker than themselves.[80] Sexual exploitation of this kind is, unfortunately, not uncommon in all-male institutions whatever their racial mix, and authorities have always found it impossible to prevent. No one, however, can argue that this is a problem confined to Aborigines or to any other specific race of people, or that it originates in any racial policy or practice. Moreover, none of the evidence suggests any of the staff were guilty.

In its *Bringing Them Home* report, the Human Rights Commission declared that of the homes for Aboriginal children in New South Wales: 'The Board regularly received complaints about conditions in these institutions.'[81] This is patently untrue. The only evidence *Bringing Them Home* provided in support was the investigation into

[78] Read, *Stolen Generations*, p 11
[79] Read, *Rape of the Soul So Profound*, p 218, n 27
[80] John Collis, *Sunday Sunrise*, Channel Seven network, 29 September 2002
[81] *Bringing Them Home*, p 44

McQuiggan's management of Kinchela in 1935, which, with characteristic carelessness, it wrongly dated to 1937. It did not point to one other case. As my survey of the evidence here demonstrates, the truth is that the board rarely — indeed very rarely — received complaints of this kind. As I noted at the start of this chapter, apart from Singleton, the institutions for Aboriginal children in New South Wales had long histories: the Cootamundra Girls Home operated from 1912 to 1968, the Kinchela Boys Home from 1924 to 1970 and the Bomaderry Children's Home from 1908 to 1980. For all this time, the historians who have denounced them have been able to find for each institution only one substantial allegation of abuse by those in charge: at Cootamundra in 1927, Bomaderry in 1934, and Kinchela in 1935.

In other words, the institutional regime for Aboriginal children in New South Wales must have set some kind of record for the *paucity* of complaints it received. Moreover, each time accusations were made, the Aborigines Protection Board acted properly. It undertook investigations quickly and at its most senior levels. Given what we now know about the abuse within other institutions for children in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Board operated one of the least abusive regimes of them all.

QUALITY OF THE TRAINING

The one genuine failing of these institutions was that they did a poor job of training their children for the workforce. Both Cootamundra and Kinchela were established to provide vocational training and for much of their history both bore the word 'training' in their names. Throughout the nineteenth century, this was also the traditional goal of most welfare institutions for white children. Girls were trained for domestic service, boys for agriculture. In 1886, the State Children's Relief Department described the ambitions it had for the destitute and neglected white boys who came into its care.

> If the boys are taught farming in the same way as it is learned by farmers' sons, and in a manner which fits them to join the ranks of honest labour, the State has surely done its duty by these wards. ... Throughout the South Coast district, where most of the boys' apprentice homes are located, it is termed 'dairy farming', which embraces butter-making and pig breeding, and sheep and cattle raising in a lesser degree, and general agriculture as ordinarily practised. It is, indeed, precisely the kind of farming which will enable the boys by-and-by to obtain good livings from small holdings. It is hoped that the new Reformatory, if carried out as

> contemplated, will send out a class of partially instructed boys who will be able to practise the agricultural industry on more scientific lines.[82]

This was also the ideal behind the Aborigines Protection Board's decision to establish its training home for boys on the dairy farm at Kinchela. When the home was established in 1924 the farm was a full-scale, operating property and the plan was to use the boys to perform the daily chores, before and after school, thereby training them on the job in both dairying and market gardening. This ideal, however, did not work out in practice. The board could only afford to pay a schoolteacher who followed the usual curriculum. Instruction in agriculture, apart from some elementary chores, was neglected. In its report on the overall activities of the Aborigines Protection Board in 1940, the Public Service Board reserved its most severe criticisms for the failure of training at Kinchela.

> As a training school in itself, the Public Service Board must say that, in its opinion, it does not meet that requirement. As in the case of the stations, an extremely limited use is made of the area available, and, as far as can be seen, this has been the case for some time prior to the inspection. Papers inspected by the Board and their inquiries indicate that poor management prior to the appointment of the present superintendent was the cause of a number of very obvious shortcomings.[83]

In 1940, the Public Service Board did not make the same criticisms of the Cootamundra home. It recorded the training available in a very brief and nondescript fashion: 'The girls are given an amount of training in domestic work, including dressmaking to fit them for subsequent apprenticeship to householders.' Apart from this, however, the girls learnt only a few domestic skills by doing household chores such as cleaning and making their beds. In the early years, attempts were made to teach the girls cooking. Margaret Tucker says when she was there in 1917 two girls at a time were rostered to the kitchen to learn cooking from the assistant matron, an attempt that invariably ended in failure and tears.[84] In later years, even though a full-time cook was employed to provide meals, any effort to teach cooking had long been abandoned. Iris Glanville, who was employed at the home as a cook in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, was interviewed by Merryl-Leigh Brindley about this:

> *Did you actually train them so they could use their skills if they went out into service?*

[82] State Children's Relief Department, *Report of the President*, 5 April 1886, p 30

[83] *Aborigines Protection, Report and Recommendations of the Public Service Board of New South Wales*, Government Printer, Sydney, 1940, p 25

[84] Margaret Tucker, *If Everyone Cared*, pp 99–100

> Oh no, it wasn't like that — there was no actual training. I've heard later people say they were trained to be servants. Well, that definitely wasn't true — not in my time anyway and that would be going back a long while. They just helped in the routine of the Home — never could have afforded to keep the place going if the girls hadn't helped. The girls went to school and they were encouraged to stay on and make something of their lives. Of course, some just weren't interested in school — a lot of them had such disrupted schooling it was hard for them. But it was just a home for neglected girls, not some training institution.[85]

THE INSTITUTIONS AT SINGLETON AND WARANGESDA

In his original pamphlet, *The Stolen Generations*, Peter Read was confident enough to damn all institutions accommodating Aboriginal children for their spiritual, intellectual and psychological deprivation.[86] He based this on the huge volume of research he claimed to have done. As noted above, Read has said he came to his conclusions 'after reading all the thousands of childcare records of the NSW Aborigines Protection Board.'[87] This was not an idle claim. In 2007, in an abstract for a paper he was to give at the National Museum of Australia, he wrote:

> Twenty five years ago I was the first and last professional historian to research the 22,000 files which comprised the entire records of the New South Wales Aborigines Protection and Welfare Boards. In this talk I will discuss how these holdings — now inaccessible — taught me about urban Aboriginal history, and the pros and cons of keeping them closed for ever.[88]

Read here exaggerated the degree of inaccessibility of these records — many are still available to bona fide researchers and Aboriginal family historians who apply to the New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs. However, his real offence was his claim to have actually researched *all* these records.

It is not difficult to prove that Read never made a full reading of even one of the three principal kinds of documents that survive from the board's past: its annual reports, its minutes, or its register of wards. His unforgiving censure of the people who created and worked in these institutions was not matched by the comprehensive investigation and close scrutiny of the evidence such an assessment demanded.

[85] Brindley, The Home on the Hill, p 153
[86] Read, *Stolen Generations*, p 11
[87] Read, *Rape of the Soul*, p 176
[88] Peter Read, 'What we'll never see again: The indigenous holdings of the New South Wales Archives Office', abstract of paper to National Museum of Australia, NAIDOC Week 2007 conference (NAIDOC stands for the National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee)

Indeed, Read's historical research of his topic was so shoddy that he was completely unaware of the existence of one government and mission-run institution in New South Wales that housed Aboriginal children for nineteen years, and he recorded a fifteen-year history of another institution that never performed the role he said it did.

Nowhere in *The Stolen Generations* does Read list the institution for Aboriginal children at Singleton, founded in 1905 by the Aborigines Inland Mission with the support of the Aborigines Protection Board, and eventually taken over and run by the board from 1918 to 1923. The Singleton home was not mentioned in his text and was absent from the table he provided of all institutions that he thought accommodated Aboriginal children from 1883 to 1969. He mentioned the other homes that were owned and conducted by the Aborigines Protection Board at Cootamundra and Kinchela, but not Singleton. He included a photograph from the Bomaderry home for babies and young children, established by the United Aborigines Mission and funded by the Aborigines Protection Board, but no photographs from Singleton.

As Chapter Two of this book demonstrates, the surviving ward registers show that from 1907 to 1928 more than twice as many children (64) were sent to the Singleton home in this period as to its successor at Kinchela (28). Had Read really examined all the ward registers as he claims to have done, he could not possibly have missed this. Moreover, if he had actually gone through all the Aborigines Protection Board annual reports, he could not have avoided seeing such entries from 1906 to 1923–24 as the following:

> 1906: Singleton: The Aborigines Inland Mission have established a Training Home in the locality, and a number of children have been admitted with the Board's concurrence.[89]

> 1918: Singleton Home. The purchase of this property was completed at a cost of £400, and forty-six children were accommodated therein at the 31st December 1918, and is practically a home for waifs. This home is under the management of Mr G. C. Smith, as Superintendent, and his wife as Matron. These people have been there for many years past in the employ of the Aborigines Inland Mission, and they are deeply imbued with the missionary spirit so necessary in dealing with the welfare of the dark people.[90]

> 1920–21: Singleton Home. The average number of boys accommodated at the Home was 30, being its full capacity. These boys are, like the girls rescued from the camps, trained in habits of cleanliness and industry, and placed out — generally on farms and stations. A School, with an average

[89] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1906*, p 9
[90] Aborigines protection Board, *Report, 1918*, p 2

> attendance of 22, is conducted in conjunction with the Home, while 3 of the boys attend the Intermediate High School. As much gardening and carpentry work as circumstances permit is undertaken, with satisfactory results.[91]

> 1923–24: [T]he Aboriginal station at Kinchela, on the Macleay River, has had dormitories provided, to which have been transferred the inmates of the Boys' Home at Singleton, which the Board closed and disposed of in 1923. A considerable saving in administrative expenses was thus affected.[92]

Read's omission also tells something about his lack of familiarity with the secondary sources, that is, the pre-existing historical literature on the subject. In the second volume of his 1970–71 trilogy on Aboriginal affairs, Charles Rowley discussed the Aborigines Inland Mission's operation of the Singleton home.[93] In Retta Dixon's 1936 book, *In the Way of His Steps*, a history of the Aborigines Inland Mission which she founded, she described the Singleton home as the first and defining movement of her organisation.[94] It was one of the mission's two original establishments and its success generated enough enthusiasm to launch a century-long program of social work and Christian conversion throughout Australia. Were she still alive, Mrs Dixon would be dismayed to see how her reputation has fared at the hands of academic historians.

In one sense, Read's failure to notice the existence of the Singleton home is in itself not a great failing. It was only a small part of government operations and its existence was shorter than most other institutions. On the other hand, it was the first of them to cater exclusively for boys and was the precursor to the boys home at Kinchela, which in the chronicles of the Stolen Generations, has one of the most gruesome reputations of all. The more serious concern is that the omission proves Read had not bothered to read all the available evidence before he made up his mind about the horrible institutional life to which all removed Aboriginal children were allegedly subjected.

Similar motives may be detected in Read's history of another institution at Warangesda. In *The Stolen Generations*, he told the story of the government's first plan to cajole Aboriginal girls into a special-purpose institution to remove them from their families. It was the first

[91] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1920–21*, p 2

[92] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1923–24*, p 2

[93] C. D. Rowley, *Outcasts in White Australia, Aboriginal Policy and Practice*, Volume II, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1971, pp 158, 219

[94] Retta Dixon, *In the Way of His Steps: A Brief History of Three Decades of History of the Aborigines Inland Mission of Australia 1905–1935*, Aborigines Inland Mission, Sydney, 1936, pp 13–19

in his list of institutions in New South Wales that housed the stolen generations. Read wrote:

> Then when the girls' dormitory was built at Warangesda Aboriginal Station in 1893, the plan was that Aboriginal girls from all over the State would go there to learn how to become domestic servants. There were no legal powers to coerce people, and since Aborigines showed no enthusiasm for the scheme, the Board resorted to threats and promises. For instance, parents who allowed their girls to go into the dormitory were allowed to stay on Warangesda Station. Those who wanted to leave were offered free rail passes if they left the girls behind.[95]

In his list of institutions that housed stolen children, Read claimed 300 girls, which he described as an approximate figure due to lack of records, passed through this dormitory between 1893 and 1909.[96]

The nineteenth century mission stations, Warangesda, Maloga and Brewarrina, had each provided a large cottage that acted as a dormitory for children of school age and above. This later became an example that Aborigines Protection Board stations followed. Like the others, the dormitory at Warangesda was not an institution that separated children from their families. All its girls came from the Warangesda station itself, where their parents also lived in cottages only a few paces from the dormitory. One of the chief reasons the missionaries provided separate quarters was to protect children, especially girls whose fathers were absent or unknown, from sexual predators. In their early years, the dormitories often housed both girls and small boys of school age. (Chapter Nine discusses in more detail the origins and various functions of mission dormitories.)

Girls usually remained in the dormitory from the ages of about six or seven to fourteen or fifteen. In New South Wales, the girls did not come from 'all over the state'. Girls' dormitories at Brewarrina and Cumeroogunga offered the same kind of training at the same time, but their students, too, were station residents and none were removed from their families.[97] In 1896, the existing Warangesda dormitory was replaced by a new and larger building —'the work faithfully performed by a carpenter sent from Sydney'[98] — but it still only accommodated ten children. The Aborigines Protection Board annual report for 1900 contained a photograph of the Warangesda dormitory matron and the ten children she supervised at the time (three of them

[95] Read, *Stolen Generations*, p 5

[96] Read, *Stolen Generations*, p 9. He repeated the same assertion and the same figure in 1996 in his organization Link-Up's submission to the Human Rights Commission inquiry: *In the Best Interest of the Child?*, pp 29, 31

[97] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1907*, pp 7, 9

[98] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1896*, p 11

small boys). Read's claim that from 1893 to 1909 it trained as many as 300 is another illustration of the scale of exaggeration he has brought to this story. A proper estimate for the total number of girls accommodated in these sixteen years would be more like 30.

Moreover, there was nothing that deserved the name of 'training program' in the dormitory for girls at Warangesda at any time between 1893 and 1905. From time to time, the matron did teach the girls some domestic skills, but none of this amounted to what might be called a program. The various reports submitted by the station manager often mentioned the dormitory — especially when a matron resigned, as nine did during these thirteen years, usually leaving the position vacant for an extended period[99] — but no report ever discussed any training done at that location. There were two principal reasons. First, for much of the time the station could not recruit someone to teach these subjects. The 1903 report from the Warangesda manager was typical: 'Miss Hyde, Dormitory Matron, having resigned on account of illness, Miss Jessie Reid was appointed to the vacancy, but she too resigned later in the year, and the position has not since been filled.'[100] Second, there were no funds for such a program. The state suffered a prolonged drought over much of this time, which threw many Aborigines out of work and onto the reserves for rations, thus eating into the board's already reduced budgets. There was very little money left for training, the board lamented in 1903, and that offered was only of the most elementary kind:

> For want of the necessary funds, the Board have been unable to carry out proposals for imparting special industrial training to aboriginal youths and girls. Wherever opportunity offers, however, situations are obtained for them, and they are reported by their employers to make fairly good rough carpenters, fencers and domestic servants. The matrons at the various stations instruct the girls in plain sewing and domestic matters generally, and on some of the stations the residents gain an insight into farming work.[101]

The first specific reference to domestic training at the Warangesda dormitory in any of the reports of the Aborigines Protection Board was in the station manager's 1906 report. He also mentioned it in 1907, 1908 and 1909, but not thereafter. Though he used the grand title of 'Girls' Training Home', this was nothing more than another name for the existing single girls' dormitory when the matron began a course of instruction in cooking and housekeeping. In 1907 the station manager reported:

[99] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1898*, p 13, *Report, 1900*, p 4 , *Report, 1903*, p 7, *Report, 1904*, p 10

[100] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1903*, p 7

[101] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1903*, p 3

> There were ten (10) children in the Girls' Training Home, which, under the able management of the Matron (Miss Rutter), continues to give every satisfaction; and at her suggestion, instructions were issued that all girls between the ages of 7 and 14 were to go into the home, otherwise the issue of rations was to be stopped.[102]

The initiative for this innovation appears to have come from this particular matron who was appointed in 1905. The station manager reported at the time: 'During the year Miss Emmeline M. F. Rutter was appointed Dormitory Matron at the station (a position which had been vacant for some time previously), and the Board intend sending any orphan children to this station for care in the dormitory.'[103] This was the first and last mention of a proposal by 'the board' to recruit orphans from outside this station for training there. There is no evidence that anything ever came of the idea.

Moreover, there was nothing exclusive to Warangesda about the matron's activities. She simply added cooking to the education curriculum for girls. By 1907 this was possible since the board in Sydney finally had funds to purchase the necessary appliances. Exactly the same training was introduced that year at the board's stations at Brewarrina and Cumeroogunga:

> Brewarrina: The girls in the dormitory are taught domestic duties daily, lessons in plain cooking and needlework forming an import part of the work, the women's and girls' clothing being made up on the station, under the direction and tuition of Mrs Hockey.[104]

> Cumeroogunga: The Board have also provided cooking utensils, including a large stove. A cookery class has been formed amongst the girls, and instruction is also to be imparted in laundry work.[105]

Warangesda did not get its own new stove until the following year, as noted in the manager's 1908 report — which also indicated the dormitory's low status in the hierarchy of station affairs:

> The butcher's shop, harness room, stable and art shed were remodelled, a blacksmith's shop erected, and a new stove fixed in the dormitory, which has proved of great value to the Matron in teaching the children cooking.[106]

The cooking classes did not last long. They ceased to be mentioned after 1909 and by 1914 the Warangesda manager reported the building was now being put to other use:

[102] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1907*, p 13
[103] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1905*, p 9
[104] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1907*, p 7
[105] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1907*, p 9
[106] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1908*, p 13

> An old building — formerly used as a girls training home — was cleaned, painted, repaired, a new verandah added, and converted into a residence for the manager.'[107]

I am not the only one who has searched the relevant records but not found the institution Read described. In 2004, Beverley Gulambali Elphick and Don Elphick published their history of Warangesda, *The Camp of Mercy: An Historical and Biographical Record of the Warangesda Aboriginal Mission/Station, Darlington Point New South Wales*. This is a study that closely follows the surviving documents. As well as the records of the Aborigines Protection Board and Aborigines Protection Association that I examined, the Elphicks also read the diaries of the managers of the Warangesda station from 1887 to 1897 and the reports of the Warangesda Aboriginal School from 1880 to 1896.[108] They discussed the girls' dormitory in very similar terms to my account above, especially the chronic difficulty of finding a matron to manage it. But they made no mention of a girls' training home or anything else resembling the kind of institution Read described. Nor did they mention parents being offered railway tickets to leave their daughters there.

In short, the institution at Warangesda, which supposedly trained 300 stolen children from all over New South Wales between 1893 and 1909, amounted to nothing more tangible than some cooking classes on a new stove given by the matron to the ten local girls living in the station dormitory. This little exercise lasted four years only, from 1906 to 1909.

All this might once have been disregarded as no more than a blunder by a historian in a hurry. However, thanks to the imprimatur provided to Read's work by the Human Rights Commission's report, this largely imaginary establishment has now entered the annals of the nation's history. *Bringing Them Home* reproduced all that Read said about it. In its history of Aboriginal policy in New South Wales, the report claimed:

> In 1893 a dormitory for girls was built on Warangesda station. From then until 1909 approximately 300 Aboriginal children were removed from their families and placed there. Local Aboriginal people were offered free railway tickets to vacate the area leaving their female children behind.[109]

[107] Aborigines Protection Board, *Report, 1914*, p 12

[108] Beverley Gulambali Elphick and Don Elphick, *The Camp of Mercy: An Historical and Biographical Record of the Warangesda Aboriginal Mission/Station, Darlington Point New South Wales*, Gulambali Aboriginal Research, Canberra, 2004, Chapter Two pp 13–40, and bibliography p 123

[109] Read, *Stolen Generations*, pp 5, 9; *Bringing Them Home*, p 40

The only source *Bringing Them Home* cited for this information was Read's *The Stolen Generations*. The Human Rights Commission, as usual, never bothered to do its own research into the subject. Hence, its report's dependence on Read as its historical authority left it awash in his errors and omissions. It, too, neglected to mention the children's institution at Singleton, it got the place and date of Kinchela's founding wrong, and it grossly misrepresented the intentions of the Aborigines Protection Board.[110] In its history of institutions in New South Wales, which it largely cut-and-pasted from books and submissions by Read and his colleagues, *Bringing Them Home* is completely untrustworthy.

Similarly, Anna Haebich's multi-award winning book *Broken Circles* (2000), was based on little original research in New South Wales, and instead relied largely on secondary sources. Haebich dutifully repeated Read's claim that the Girls' Training Home was opened at Warangesda in 1893, and she listed it as part of her national survey of institutions created for Aborigines in the nineteenth century.[111] For the same reason, Haebich did not know of the existence of the Singleton children's home and, like *Bringing Them Home*, she was quite confused about the origins of Kinchela.[112] Haebich's book today is one of the main sources for student projects on the Stolen Generations, so the misinformation she garnered from Read will taint undergraduate and high school historical essays for many years to come.

[110] *Bringing Them Home*, Chapter 3: NSW and the ACT, pp 39–46
[111] Haebich, *Broken Circles*, p 150
[112] Haebich, *Broken Circles*, p 183

CHAPTER SIX

The credibility of the stolen children

PRIMA FACIE, we should accept the truth of the testimony of those suffering or escaping from trauma and persecution. It is the normal and humane thing to do. The victims of outrage and people fearing violence deserve our immediate assistance and sympathy without them having to verify their claims. Only if we learn of other, independent evidence that questions what they say should we ask for substantiation. A number of commentators have made the point that, on these grounds, we should accept whatever members of the Stolen Generations say about their life experiences. For instance:

> Ronald Wilson's report is not a radical tract. It relies extensively on the testimony of the separated generation. History indicates that the evidence of ordinary citizens who are caught up in a trauma is usually accurate. No substantial evidence has come forward over the last year to challenge the validity of the facts presented in the *Bringing Them Home* report.
>
> — Gerard Henderson, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1998[1]

> Many books on the Stalin terror or the Holocaust rely heavily on the testimony of victims. I have never encountered a serious argument suggesting the general unreliability of this kind of evidence. The inquiry into the stolen children heard directly from 535 Aborigines. Is it being suggested that the overall picture that the witnesses painted might represent a kind of collective hallucination?
>
> — Robert Manne, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1998[2]

[1] Gerard Henderson, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 May 1998, p 15
[2] Robert Manne, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 March 1998, p 15

> Suggestive of the history-making and testimonial narrative produced by the victims in the Eichmann trial, stories from *Bringing Them Home* brought into sharp visibility the effects of the racist policy of removal, and constructed a narrative of what it meant to be 'stolen', rather than provide intimate historical evidence and factual information about the reasons for separation from their families and the identity of the officials involved in the process. Fiona's story from *Bringing Them Home* provides an entry to reading Nazi perpetrator processes in the Holocaust.
>
> — Simone Gigliotti, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 2003[3]

There is a critical difference between the testimony of the survivors of historical atrocities such as those committed by the Nazi and Communist regimes and the evidence for the Stolen Generations thesis. The victims of Stalin, Mao and Hitler were mostly adults when the events occurred and their testimony was related to events they took part in or witnessed. The debate over the Stolen Generations is not primarily about evidence of that kind. While experiences of Aboriginal children in welfare institutions can certainly be revealing, they are not the central issue. No one denies that Aboriginal children were institutionalized under conditions of duress in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, just like many white children were. The question is why this was done. The Australian debate hinges on the *intentions* of those who made and administered government policy for Aborigines. Were children removed for acceptable reasons of child welfare or were they taken to end their Aboriginality? The adjective 'stolen' is an outright indictment of those who decided the policy.

Hence, analogies with the kind of evidence that has convinced most people of the horrors of the Holocaust and the Stalinist terror do not fit. In Australia, the affected children were often too young to understand what government motives might have been. Even if the children had been informed of the thinking behind the policy, most would still not have understood since the welfare policy of a government bureaucracy in the capital city was something beyond their comprehension. This is another reason why the *Bringing Them Home* report's focus on recollections of childhood experience rendered its finding of genocide, which is a crime of government and of intent, so contentious.

Even in their own particular cases, those children who were removed were rarely told the reason. In her interviews with former inmates of the Moore River Settlement north of Perth, author Susan Maushart recorded:

[3] Simone Gigliotti, 'Unspeakable Pasts as Limit Events: The Holocaust, Genocide and the Stolen Generations', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 49, 2, 2003, p 173

> When the former children of Moore River were asked in interviews as adults why they thought they had been placed in the settlement, or what purpose they believed the system was designed to serve, the vast majority responded that they had no idea. These were questions they themselves had been pondering all of their lives.[4]

Of course, there were others, as examples from the previous chapter demonstrated, who guessed accurately enough.

> I can understand why they took me — mum and dad were terrible when they were on the grog — in fact we were dead scared — used to bash us up.[5]

> [S]he found that she couldn't manage going to work at the cannery and supporting nine kids. So, there was nothing else for Mum. She put us into the girls' home at Cootamundra.[6]

> I'd been in and out of Bomaderry Home and then, suddenly, off to Coota. Don't know why — never told. Used to go back home every now and then but Mum and Dad drank a bit so they'd keep checking on us — the welfare — and in we'd go again.[7]

At most, the Aboriginal children concerned can tell us about what happened to them in institutions or the workforce. But even here, they don't know the full story because in a debate over policies that allegedly discriminated on the basis of race, the Aboriginal children did not have the knowledge to make a comparison with what happened to white children at the same time. As previous chapters have argued, in New South Wales there were no fundamentally different welfare measures applied to black children. They were subject to very similar policies, albeit with a historical time lag, as white children in similar circumstances.

As I noted in Chapter One, for most of the period over which Aboriginal children have been removed from their communities, neither the children nor their parents were aware that they were being subject to what historians later defined as a campaign to eliminate their Aboriginality. In this context, what made the original Stolen Generations thesis of the white academic Peter Read more convincing were the writings of a number of Aborigines who became national celebrities on the strength of it. In particular, a small number

[4] Susan Maushart, *Sort of a Place Like Home: Remembering the Moore River Native Settlement*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 1993, p 335

[5] Merryl-Leigh Brindley, The Home on the Hill: The Story Behind the Cootamundra Girls' Home, MA (Aboriginal Studies) thesis, University of South Australia, 1994, p 175

[6] Unidentified woman in Anne Deveson, *Faces of Change*, (book of the television series), ABC/Fontana, Melbourne, 1984, pp 109–10

[7] Brindley, *The Home on the Hill*, p 174

of books and essays recounting the experience of allegedly stolen children became famous. They subsequently became the subject of films, television documentaries and magazine profiles. Some of these works were subsequently set as compulsory reading for schoolchildren. This chapter discusses the credibility of four of the most influential Aboriginal authors of the story: Margaret Tucker, Sally Morgan, Lowitja O'Donoghue and Charles Perkins. In all four cases, there are serious questions that can be raised about their accounts. So much so, the conclusion is inescapable that some of the key personal testimony of the best known people who claim to be stolen children should not be trusted.

MARGARET TUCKER'S POLITICAL FICTION

> It seems likely that, as a result of this conjunction of the television series, the documentary film and the autobiography, Tucker's account became the paradigmatic story of forcible removal, just as it, along with the stories told by Read and Edwards, made Cootamundra a central site or place for the history, much in the same way as Gallipoli and Auschwitz have come to symbolize wider events.
>
> — Bain Attwood, 'Learning About the Truth: the Stolen Generations Narrative' 2001[8]

Almost every major discussion paper on the Stolen Generations contains a quotation from the autobiography of Margaret Tucker, *If Everyone Cared*. Published in 1977, it permeated the documentary film *Lousy Little Sixpence* broadcast on SBS television in 1983. The success of the documentary led to the book being reprinted three times in 1983 and 1984. It was subsequently set as a textbook for high schools in several states, which guaranteed its sales for many years. Over the past three decades, extracts from the book's most famous passage about Tucker's removal from Moonahcullah Aboriginal Station in south-western New South Wales have been quoted at length in works by Peter Read, Richard Chisholm, Robert Manne and, of course, the *Bringing Them Home* report.[9] Tony Barta quoted from the

[8] Bain Attwood, 'Learning About the Truth: the Stolen Generations Narrative', in Bain Attwood and Fiona Magowan, eds, *Telling Stories: Indigenous History and Memory in Australia and New Zealand*, Allen & Unwin, 2001, p 195

[9] Peter Read, *The Stolen Generations: The Removal of Aboriginal Children in New South Wales 1883 to 1969*, NSW Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, Sydney, Occasional Paper No. 1, Sydney, 1981, pp 18–19; Richard Chisholm, *Black Children, White Welfare? Aboriginal Child Welfare Law and Policy in New South Wales*, Social Welfare Research Centre, University of New South Wales, April, 1985, pp 10–12; Robert Manne, 'The Stolen Generations',

passage to introduce his account of Kevin Rudd's 2008 apology and how Rudd avoided the issue of genocide.[10] Richard Broome paraphrased the incident and repeated, uncritically, Tucker's claims about her brutal treatment at the hands of her first employer, 'possibly a sadist'.[11] Even though the following is a very long extract to publish, several writers have found it so compelling, they have quoted it in full. The passage starts one day in 1917 when Margaret Clements, as her name was then, aged thirteen, and her sister May, aged eleven, were at school at Moonahcullah.

> Between morning school and the lunch break, we heard the unmistakeable sound of a motor car. Out where we were motor cars were very rare at that time, and although we were seething with curiosity we did not dare move from our desks ... I cannot remember everything that went on, but the next thing I do remember was that the policeman and Mr Hill came into the school. Mrs Hill seemed to be in a heated argument with her husband. She was very distressed.
>
> The children were all standing (we always stood up when visitors came and the police were no exception). My sister May and another little girl, an orphan, started to cry. Then others. They may have heard the conversation. I was puzzled to know what they were crying for, until Mr Hill told all the children to leave the school, except myself and May and Myrtle Taylor, who was the same age as May (eleven years). Myrtle was an orphan reared by Mrs Maggie Briggs. She was very fair-skinned and pretty.
>
> I had forgotten about Brungle and the gang of men representing the Aborigines Protection Board who had visited when we were staying there. But then it came to me in a rush! But I didn't believe for a moment that my mother would let us go. She would put a stop to it! All the children who had been dismissed must have run home and told their parents what was happening at school. When I looked out that schoolroom door, every Moonahcullah Aboriginal mother — some with babies in arms — and a sprinkling of elderly men were standing in groups. Most of the younger men were away working on homesteads and sheep stations or farms. Then I started to cry ...

Quadrant, January-February 1998, pp 54–5; Robert Manne, *In Denial: The Stolen Generations and the Right*, The Australian Quarterly Essay, 1, 2001, Schwartz Publishing, Melbourne, pp 10–13; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children From Their Families*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, April 1997, p 43

[10] Tony Barta, 'Sorry, and not Sorry, in Australia: How the Apology to the Stolen Generations Buried a History of Genocide', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 10, 2, 2008

[11] Richard Broome, *Aboriginal Australians*, 2nd ed., Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1994, p 84

Mrs Hill, the tears running down her cheeks, made a valiant attempt to prolong our stay. I did not realize she had sent our two radicals Eric and Osley to race the mile and a half to get our mother. I will never forget her for that. She stood her ground, against her husband, the police, the driver of the car. 'Well, they can't go without something to eat, and it is lunch time,' she said, in a determined way.

'No thank you Teacher, we are not hungry,' we said.

'All the same, you children are not going that long journey (first to Deniliquin, then many more miles to Finley, where we would catch the train to Cootamundra) without food,' she insisted.

She went out to her house at the side of the school, taking as long as she dared to prepare something to eat. Her husband, his face going purple, was looking at his watch every few minutes ...

We started to cry again and most of our school mates and the mothers too, when our mother, like an angel, came through the schoolroom door. Little Myrtle's auntie rushed in too.

I thought: 'Everything will be right now. Mum won't let us go.'

Myrtle was grabbed up by her auntie. We had our arms round our mother, and refused to let go. She still had her apron on, and must have run the whole one and a half miles. She arrived just in time, due to the kindness of Mrs Hill. As we hung onto our mother she said fiercely, 'They are my children and they are not going away with you.'

The policeman, who no doubt was doing his duty, patted his handcuffs, which were in a leather case on his belt, and which May and I thought was a revolver.

'Mrs Clements,' he said, 'I'll have to use this if you do not let us take these children now.'

Thinking that policeman would shoot Mother, because she was trying to stop him, we screamed, 'We'll go with him Mum, we'll go.' I cannot forget any detail of that moment, it stands out as though it was yesterday. I cannot ever see kittens taken from their mother cat without remembering that scene. It is just on sixty years ago.

However, the policeman must have had a heart, because he allowed my mother to come in the car with us as far as Deniliquin. She had no money, and took nothing with her, only the clothes she had on. Then the policeman sprang another shock. He said he had to go to the hospital to pick up Geraldine, who was to be taken as well. The horror on my mother's face and her heartbroken cry! I tried to reason why all this was happening to us, and tried not to think.

All my mother could say was, 'Oh, no, not my Baby, please let me have her. I will look after her.'

As that policeman walked up the hospital path to get my little sister, May and Myrtle and I sobbed quietly. Mother got out of the car and stood waiting with a hopeless look. Her tears had run dry I guess. I thought to myself, I will gladly go, if only they will leave Geraldine with Mother.

'Mrs Clements, you can have your little girl. She left the hospital this morning,' said the policeman.

> Mother simply took that policeman's hand and kissed it and said, 'Thank you, thank you.'
>
> Then we were taken to the police station, where the policeman no doubt had to report. Mother followed him, thinking she could beg once more for us, only to rush out when she heard the car start up. My last memory of her for many years was her waving pathetically, as we waved back and called out goodbye to her, but we were too far away for her to hear us.
>
> I heard years later how after watching us go out of her life, she wandered away from the police station along the road leading out of the town to Moonahcullah. She was worn out, with no food or money, her apron still on. She wandered off the road to rest in the long grass under a tree. That is where old Uncle and Aunt found her the next day ... They found our mother still moaning and crying. They heard the sounds and thought it was an animal in pain.[12]

This is obviously a very moving piece of writing. The political commentator Robert Manne said it had 'a particularly powerful effect on me'. It was one of two pieces of evidence he found in 1997 which, after he had read the *Bringing Them Home* report, not only left him 'shocked, moved and ashamed' about the plight of Aborigines but converted him from the conservative side of politics to the Left.[13] Manne has also described how much impact this story has had on the vision most people have of the stolen children. Although Tucker's autobiography represented a singular experience, 'it may remind us that there were tens of thousands of individual experiences in this century of a similar kind'.[14]

In other words, Tucker not only created the first well-known portrayal of a stolen Aboriginal child but she produced the most memorable, indeed definitive, picture of how the process took place. Tucker's writing became the paradigmatic personal testimony of the Stolen Generations. In 1983, two of the four episodes of the fictional SBS television drama series, *Women of the Sun*, included scenes inspired by the passage above. One episode concludes with a despairing mother in her apron running after the buggy in which police are removing her daughter from the local mission to the Cootamundra home for girls; in the other, police arrive while the Aboriginal men are absent from the mission, seize two girls and bundle them into their car and drive off, while the women and old people stand by watching helplessly. In 2002, when Phil Noyce made his film *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, he disregarded the text of the book he was working from.

[12] Margaret Tucker, *If Everyone Cared: Autobiography of Margaret Tucker MBE*, (1977), Grosvenor Books, Melbourne, 1983 ed., pp 90–4
[13] Robert Manne, 'Sorry Business', *The Monthly*, March 2008, p 22
[14] Manne, 'The Stolen Generations', p 55

In the book, two girls were removed from their camp at Jigalong in 1931 on horseback, their family acquiescing reluctantly but without resistance.[15] Noyce's film, however, portrayed an event similar to Tucker's story, in which a policeman seizes the girls from their mother and grandmother, forces them into a car and drives off with them. The two older women chase the car some distance, trying to release the girls. Failing, they fall to the ground, moaning like animals in pain. Such a dramatic scene clearly has the power to move hearts and minds.

Unfortunately, all those who believe Margaret Tucker's story have been misled. The removal scene described in her book did not occur in the way she claimed. Margaret and her sister May were not removed to Cootamundra at the same time in 1917.

The admission records show that Margaret Clements was admitted to Cootamundra, aged thirteen, in 1917. However, Margaret's sister May did not arrive at Cootamundra until three years later, in April 1920 when she was aged fifteen. It was May and her other sister Evelyn (the third eldest of the four sisters but the one not mentioned by Margaret in her account of their removal in 1917) who went to Cootamundra at about the same time. Evelyn, aged thirteen, was admitted in 1920, shortly after May. However, Evelyn was not taken from the same site as May. Their mother had left the sisters with relatives at different missions while she worked full-time on a rural property and while their father, who had long deserted the family, was living in Sydney. Evelyn was removed not from Moonahcullah with May but from the Erambie Mission at Cowra. In other words, the tale told in Margaret Tucker's autobiography of two sisters being removed to Cootamundra from the same mission on the same day while their mother looked on helplessly never happened that way.

The evidence for this was published in 2004 in a historical and genealogical study of the residents of the Warangesda Aboriginal Mission Station.[16] Two of the four Clements sisters, Margaret and Geraldine, were born at Warangesda in 1904 and 1910 respectively, and the genealogy lists the births, deaths and marriages of the whole family, as well as other information culled from government records. The authors of the genealogy, Beverley Gulambali Elphick and Don Elphick, have specialized for more than a decade in combing through New South Wales government records, especially those of the Abori-

[15] Doris Pilkington, *Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence*, (1996), University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 2002 ed., pp 44–5

[16] Beverley Gulambali Elphick and Don Elphick, *The Camp of Mercy: An Historical and Biographical Record of the Warangesda Aboriginal Mission/Station, Darlington Point, New South Wales*, Gulambali Aboriginal Research, Canberra, 2004, p 47

gines Protection Board and the Department of Education, to provide information to assist Aboriginal people trace their family backgrounds. Among their published works are a complete list of Aboriginal people mentioned in the minutes of the Aborigines Protection Board, a list of all the boys who attended Kinchela Aboriginal School, and lists of all residents of the Warangesda, Maloga, Cumeroogunga, Moonahcullah and Menindee stations and missions.[17] As well as data from specifically Aboriginal sources such as the minutes and Ward Registers of the Aborigines Protection Board, their lists include information gleaned from other government records, especially births, deaths and marriages registers and school admission books.

The publications of the Elphicks are not interpretative and follow closely the contents of the records they find. The Elphicks are not authors with any motive to expose the flaws in Margaret Tucker's tale. Mrs Elphick is a woman of Aboriginal descent and both she and her husband believe the Stolen Generations story. One of their works is dedicated 'to all the members of the "Stolen Generations" and to their Parents, their children, grandchildren and future generations'.[18]

Although I have read the majority of the archival sources the Elphicks consulted, I cannot discuss the individual cases I found there. To gain access to the Ward Registers and other records of the Aborigines Protection Board that are now deposited in the New South Wales State Archives, I was required by the state Department of Aboriginal Affairs to sign an undertaking that I would not publicly discuss any personal information about individuals I found there. Hence I cannot comment myself on what the Ward Registers and other board records reveal about the life of Margaret Clements and her sisters. Nonetheless, there is no undertaking that prevents me from describing the content of the Elphicks' publications, which are held by several public and university libraries and which are available to anyone who wants to read them there.

Those with a sceptical eye who read the whole of Tucker's book *If Everyone Cared* will find other evidence in conflict with the details of her dramatic removal scene. For instance, in the long passage above, Tucker wrote about her mother 'watching us go out of her life' and said 'my last memory of her for many years was her waving patheti-

[17] Beverley and Don Elphick, *Kinchela Aboriginal Home and School: Alphabetical Index of Students,* Canberra, 1997; Beverley and Don Elphick, *Riverina Aboriginals 1874–1945*, Canberra, 1996; Beverley and Don Elphick, *Menindee Mission Station 1933–1949*, Canberra 1996; Don Elphick, *Aborigines Mentioned in the Minutes of the Meetings of the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Board (APB 1890–1939) and the Aborigines Welfare Board (AWB 1939–1969)*, Canberra, 1998

[18] *Riverina Aboriginals*, dedication page

cally, as we waved back and called out goodbye to her'. Yet Tucker retained frequent personal contact with her mother throughout her teenage years. She spent only three months at the Cootamundra home[19] and was then apprenticed as a nursemaid to a household in the Sydney suburb of Cheltenham. From there, she exchanged letters with her mother who soon visited her. In fact, both her parents visited her at Cheltenham at different times and met her employer. On one occasion, her mother stayed with her there overnight. Her mother then moved full-time to Sydney where she found a job.

In Margaret's second position in a household in the suburb of Neutral Bay, her mother visited her there, too. On one of her days off, Margaret accompanied her mother and her younger sister Geraldine on an outing on the Sydney Harbour ferries. At Neutral Bay she was also visited several times by her sister May and by her Auntie May, who sometimes stayed in her employers' house overnight. At one time, Margaret went home for two weeks' holiday at Moonahcullah Aboriginal Station, and then returned to her job. All this is recorded in later chapters of *If Everyone Cared*.[20] In 1925, after her apprenticeship was complete Margaret, aged 21, and her mother moved to Melbourne together.

Nor did the other two 'stolen' sisters, May and Evelyn, 'go out of' their mother's life. After brief training at Cootamundra in 1920 followed by very short periods in the workforce, interspersed by returns to their mother's care, they moved to Melbourne in 1925 to live with her too. In the following decade Mrs Clements returned to Cumeroogunga and wrote a brief memoir of her life, recording with some satisfaction how close she remained to her extended family:

> Two of my daughters are here with me. They work on the fruit. I mind the younger children when they are away. Margaret works in a factory in Melbourne, and May works in a hospital, while her husband is away shearing. Their children are grown up. One of my great nephews goes to a High School, and some of the others are doing well in school. I have one great grandson.[21]

[19] Margaret Tucker, interview in the documentary film *Lousy Little Sixpence*, Sixpence Productions/Australian Film Commission, producers Alec Morgan and Gerald Bostock, director Alec Morgan, 1983. However, in *If Everyone Cared*, p 105, Tucker gives the impression she was at Cootamundra for two years from 1917 to 1919. Although for the reasons given earlier I cannot comment on which version her APB file reveals was true, at the time Tucker was in the institution most girls her age spent only a few months there.

[20] Tucker, *If Everyone Cared*, pp 120–30

[21] Theresa Clements, *From Old Maloga: The Memoirs of an Aboriginal Woman*, Fraser & Morphet printers, Prahran, 193_, p 7. In this memoir Mrs

Some might regard the objections I have raised here as quibbles about details that fail to seriously question the veracity of the big picture. After all, the documentary record still confirms much of Tucker's story. Two girls, Margaret and her friend Myrtle Taylor, were removed from Moonahcullah to Cootamundra on the same day in 1917, and two of the Clements sisters, May and Evelyn, were removed from their family at about the same time in 1920. Isn't this close enough to the truth to still carry the same weight? Many will prefer to think so. But others, when told that the most dramatic scene in the story was fictionalized, will suspect that more might have been invented too. It is not difficult to show that there are many other problems with this book that warrant serious scepticism about its reliability.

It should be obvious to anyone with experience in publishing that *If Everyone Cared* was not written by an elderly Aboriginal woman whose education ended when she left her mission school aged thirteen. Tucker's long and moving passage above, with its dramatic structure and precisely recalled dialogue, bears all the hallmarks of a professional writer experienced in journalism and/or fiction. In fact, there were at least two other people who re-worked the original text. In the 1970s, Tucker wrote her memoirs in stages. When she had finished a passage she gave her handwritten pages to a white friend, Jean Hughes, a former business executive and then member of the Moral Rearmament movement, who re-wrote them as she prepared the typescript. An unnamed professional editor at publishing house Ure Smith then produced the final version, re-working the text yet again. In the process, a considerable volume of the original material was altered and deleted.

One of the major omissions was Tucker's role in the Melbourne branch of the Communist Party of Australia. From other sources, however, it is clear that in the 1930s Tucker was a well-known identity in radical circles in Melbourne. She was a good-looking young woman, in demand as a singer and performer at left-wing parties, and

Clements acknowledged that when her daughters were young she had left them with her sister on an Aboriginal station while she worked elsewhere to support them, and that authorities removed two of her daughters at the same time. She did not say which two or what year this occurred. However, she added: 'they rounded up some of the girls at Cummera at the same time. Some escaped by swimming across to Victoria.' This was an incident widely remembered by the Cumeroogunga community as occurring in 1919, two years after Margaret went to Cootamundra but less than one year before the Elphicks' records show May and Evelyn were sent there. See Charles Rowley, *Outcasts in White Australia: Aboriginal Policy and Practice*, Volume II, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1971, p 169.

often spoke on the Communist platform on Sundays at Yarra Bank. She described herself as a 'constant reader' of the Communist Party weekly newspaper of the 1930s, *Workers' Voice*, and sometimes wrote for it. She was known as 'the black Communist'.[22] In her original manuscript, Tucker said she had joined the Communists after the break-up of her marriage to her white husband Phil Tucker in 1933. Her friends in the party offered her a place to live at a time when she had nowhere else to go, and long before she met other Aboriginal militants.[23]

At that time, the Communists saw Aborigines as a potential constituency. The party soon came to have more influence than any other political body on the small group of Aboriginal political activists in Melbourne and Sydney. The first, unpublished version of Tucker's memoir of her childhood and apprenticeship in domestic service, entitled *An Aboriginal Girl's Plea for Understanding*, was written in this period.[24] It is most likely that the very idea of writing an account of her exploitation at the hands of police, bureaucrats and rich white employers came from the Communist Party.

In 1930, the party in Australia was taken over by a faction that swore 'unswerving loyalty' to the Communist International, or Comintern, controlled by the now unchallenged head of the USSR, Joseph Stalin.[25] The 'new line' of the Comintern sought constituents not only among the working classes but also the poorest members of society. In Australia, this led Communists to adopt the Comintern's international policy on indigenous peoples and to try to recruit Aborigines as members. In September 1931, the party published its 'draft program' for Aborigines:

> Such gentle British colonizing devices as 'Abo shooting hunts', poisoning of the only water holes in the desert country, cyanide in the meat, and strychnine in the flour, police shooting parties, burning the bush over their heads, segregating sexes, kidnapping the children — particularly

[22] Jennifer Jones, 'The Black Communist: The Contested Memory of Margaret Tucker', *Hecate*, 22, 2, 2000, pp 135–45; Jennifer Jones, 'As Long as She Got Her Voice: How Cross-Cultural Collaboration Shapes Aboriginal Textuality', *Altitude*, 5, Reading Indigenous Australian Texts Part 1, www.api-network.com/cgi-bin/altitude21c/fly?page=Issue5; Half-Caste Aborigine (Margaret Tucker), 'Conditions at Cumeroogunga', *Workers' Voice*, 1 March 1939, in Bain Attwood and Andrew Marcus, eds., *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights: A Documentary History*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1999, pp 160–1

[23] Jones, 'The Black Communist', p 138

[24] Clements, *From Old Maloga*, p 6

[25] Stuart Macintyre, *The Reds: The Communist Party of Australia, From Origins to Illegality*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1998, pp 160–5

> females — and putting them to work hundreds of miles away from their race and parents ... setting up organizations of crawlers and kidnappers, known as 'Aborigines Protection Boards' to enslave the remaining members of the tribes, and 'Mission Stations', under dope peddlers to muster the youth so that they can be sold into slavery — such truly British methods were used, and are still being used to enslave the Australian aborigines and to totally exterminate the race so that the crimes of British and Australian imperialists may be covered up.

Among the list of fourteen demands published in the draft program for Aborigines, (which also included handing back central, northern and north-west Australia to create independent 'aboriginal republics'), the Communists wanted:

> 8. Absolute prohibition of the kidnapping of Aboriginal children by the APB, whether to hire them out as slaves, place them in 'missions', goals or 'correction' homes.
>
> 9. Full and unrestricted right of aboriginal and half-caste parents to their children, without living in constant fear that the APB or mission stations will kidnap them to send into slavery ...
>
> Workers, intellectuals, humanitarians, scientists, anti-imperialists, fight for these demands for the aboriginal race. Prevent capitalism exterminating this race through bare-faced murder or slavery. Struggle with the aborigines against Australian imperialism! Workers and oppressed peoples of all lands unite! Smash imperialism![26]

This was the 'new line' the party required Margaret Tucker to absorb. Her Communist mentors clearly recognised the propaganda potential of a story about Aboriginal children being kidnapped into slavery in order to exterminate the race.

At the time, Communist parties around the world pursued a strategy of pushing their message through authors drawn from groups the party defined as oppressed. From the 1930s to the 1950s, socialist realist literature was a tactical weapon in the Communist-inspired cultural wars of the period. The strategy was most influential in the United States, where the socialist realist novel became a staple of New York publishing during the Great Depression. In Australia, the party recruited not only Tucker but other Aboriginal women, Kath Walker and Monica Clare, to produce work of the same kind.[27]

[26] *The Workers Weekly*, 24 September 1931, p 2

[27] Jones, 'The Black Communist', pp 144–5 notes 31–2; Mudrooroo Narogin, *Writing From the Fringe*, Hyland House, Melbourne, 1990, pp 174–5; John Collins, 'A Mate in Publishing', in Adam Shoemaker ed., *Oodgeroo: A Tribute*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1994, pp 10–14; Keith Windschuttle, 'Steinbeck's Myth of the Okies', *New Criterion*, June 2002

Tucker relished this role and immersed herself in all it involved. In the 1930s, she began to tell wildly exaggerated stories about herself. She publicly declared she was an Aboriginal princess. Despite their egalitarian pretensions, the Communists were keen for newspaper and newsreel reporters to believe that a member of Aboriginal royalty had joined their cause. At the time, it was popularly believed that traditional Aboriginal society had been governed by tribal kings and queens, and Tucker was far from the only Aborigine to cultivate celebrity status under this mantle.[28]

In 1935, Cinesound produced a newsreel about her political activism entitled *A Princess of an Ancient Tribe*.[29] This was a persona she maintained for the next 30 years. She called herself 'Princess Lilardia of the Ulupna Tribe of the Murray River district' and used this title when she travelled overseas. In 1958 she attended a conference of the Moral Rearmament movement in the United States under this name. In 1963 as Princess Lilardia she was a guest of Queen Salote of Tonga.[30] In reality, Tucker was neither a princess nor a tribal Aborigine. She was a part-Aboriginal girl born and raised on a government mission to a part-Aboriginal mother and a part-Aboriginal father of 'no fixed address' who deserted his family.

In the 1950s, Tucker became caught up in Cold War politics when she was recruited into the anti-Communist religious organization Moral Rearmament. She was targeted by that movement because of her Communist past and her potential as a convert to the other side to provide a new role model for Aboriginal people. A number of other prominent Aborigines who had previously been members or associates of the Communist Party, including the famous tenor Harold Blair, were recruited by Moral Rearmament at the same time for the same reasons.[31] Tucker was befriended by Moral Rearmament

[28] This was a belief with a long tradition, dating back to the first half of the nineteenth century. In Western Australia alone there was King Tom at Albany, King Jerome at Wagin, King Wingan at Pinjarra and King Billy at Geraldton: Peter Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens: The Aboriginal Problem in Western Australia 1898–1954*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1973, p 10

[29] An extract from this 1935 film is shown in the documentary *Lousy Little Sixpence*.

[30] Margaret Tucker, 'As I Saw the World Abroad', *Dawn*, Aborigines Welfare Board, March 1958, pp 2–3; Sylvia Cust, 'Princess Lilardia as Guest of Queen Salote of Tonga', *Dawn*, Aborigines Welfare Board, October 1963, pp 5–7

[31] Kenneth Harrison, *Dark Man, White World: A Portrait of Tenor Harold Blair*, Novalit, Melbourne, 1975, pp 54–89, 188–206. Harrison was another Moral Rearmament member who fulfilled a similar role in writing Blair's biography as Jean Hughes did in Tucker's 'autobiography'.

member, Michael Thwaites, a poet whose covert day job was head of counter-intelligence at the Australian Security Intelligence Organization. Thwaites was the man who brought off one of the great espionage coups of the Cold War by persuading the Soviet spy, Vladimir Petrov, to defect to Australia.[32]

Moral Rearmament helped Tucker develop her public speaking skills and funded her tours lecture in Australia and overseas. For the four years she worked on her book, the organization supported Tucker by giving her a room of her own in the Melbourne flat of Jean Hughes, plus the loan of a rural chalet at Lake Eildon.

From the evidence of the original hand-written manuscript and later drafts and typescripts of *If Everyone Cared*, the literary critic Jennifer Jones has demonstrated that Jean Hughes re-wrote many passages, deleted others, and gave the book its ultimate structure. Hughes's main aim was to play down Tucker's earlier commitment to Communism and make her encounter with Moral Rearmament appear the culmination of her political education and personal transformation. When the original publisher, Ure Smith, declined to reprint the 1977 edition, Moral Rearmament's own publishing firm, Grosvenor House, took it over. The television broadcast of *Lousy Little Sixpence* in 1983 gave Tucker and her story national prominence and, as a result, *If Everyone Cared* became Grosvenor House's most successful title, selling 18,000 copies in six editions.[33]

Despite the right-wing connections of her later life, Tucker did not fit the model of a neoconservative convert.[34] She did not turn her back on the radicalism of her youth and always retained a sentimental attachment to that part of her life. In her interview in 1983 for *Lousy Little Sixpence*, she still spoke warmly of her old Communist friends:

> The lady that I stayed with and her husband was George Franks. He was the head of Trades Hall and this and that and everything, you know. Well, he was a well-known Communist too. He used to take me to all the meetings. They were very interested in the down-trodden people. Well, I felt that my people were very down-trodden and I wasn't backward in coming forward and saying what I felt, you know. They seemed to speak a lot of what I was feeling, you know. It built up my thinking. It came out in words then, you see. It was a wonderful way of putting my people's plight in the eyes of the world.

[32] Jones, 'The Black Communist', pp 140–1; Hal G. P. Colebatch, 'Michael Thwaites, 1915–2005', *Quadrant*, January 2006

[33] Jones, 'The Black Communist', pp 138–40, 144 n 21

[34] Irving Kristol, *Neoconservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea*, Free Press, New York, 1995

Yet at other times, and for other audiences, she could put a quite different perspective on her past. In 1958, she even had a good word for the Cootamundra Girls' Home and the Aborigines Protection Board. In an article for the board's magazine *Dawn* about her tour of the United States for Moral Rearmament, she prefaced her travelogue by praising the board's officers:

> Being an old girl of the Cootamundra Girls' Home I also remember Mr Mullins, Mr Pettit and Miss Lowe and although I did not know Mrs English, I am very familiar with her name and the good work she has done for our girls.[35]

It should be apparent from all of this that very little of *If Everyone Cared* can be treated as a primary historical source. The book is deeply immersed in the trajectories of Tucker's political career. It is distorted by her misrepresentations about major incidents, by exaggerations about her separation and royal status, and by the direct influence of the assorted political mentors who adopted her and influenced her text for their own purposes. No one can seriously regard it as unadulterated historical memory or first-hand testimony. Academic historians who have long relied upon it have not performed their professional responsibility to give the book a critical inspection.

If Everyone Cared should have been regarded as a form of political fiction in much the same mould as Frank Hardy's Communist tract *Power Without Glory*.[36] Tucker's account is a paradigmatic story alright, but the paradigm is the rarely acknowledged issue of the political objectives of so much of the personal testimony used in Aboriginal history.

SALLY MORGAN'S FAMILY MELODRAMA

One author who has done probably more than even Margaret Tucker to cement the story of the Stolen Generations in the popular mindset is Sally Morgan. When her book *My Place* was published in 1987, it immediately became a best-seller through the bookshop trade and was

[35] Margaret Tucker, 'As I Saw the World Abroad', *Dawn*, Aborigines Welfare Board, March 1958, p 2. Pettit and Mullins had both at different times been Secretary of the Aborigines Protection Board and Aborigines Welfare Board; Mrs English was an inspector of the Aborigines Welfare Board.

[36] Pauline Armstrong, *Frank Hardy and the Making of Power Without Glory*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2000, demonstrates this book originated in the political tactics of Ted Hill and Ralph Gibson of the Melbourne branch of the Communist Party of Australia, and that Hardy was largely their mouthpiece. See also 'A Literary Hoodlum', Chapter 21 of James Griffin, *John Wren: A Life Reconsidered*, Scribe Publications, Melbourne 2004

subsequently taken up by the education market. By 2004, its inclusion on the senior high school literature syllabus of most state education departments lifted its sales past 600,000 copies.[37]

My Place is part detective story and part personal discovery by a young woman who grew up in the suburbs of Perth. Starting out with only a few clues about her family identity, Morgan gradually persuaded her mother, her grandmother and her grandmother's brother to tell the stories of their lives they had previously kept secret.

The book tells how, as a child at school, Morgan knew that she, like her mother, had a slightly darker skin hue than their neighbours but she accepted her mother's advice: 'Tell them you're Indian.'[38] While she initially finds this explanation exciting and exotic, as she grows up she realizes it is not true and yearns to resolve the mystery of her existence: 'The feeling that a very vital part of me was missing and that I'd never belong anywhere.' She goes to university in the early 1970s where she studies psychology and adopts the leftist counter-cultural lifestyle of the prevailing political fashion. From then on, she gradually gleans from her family more clues about their past. She eventually finds her grandmother was descended from Aborigines in the north-west of Western Australia. She and her mother then visit the sheep station, Corunna Downs near Marble Bar, where her grandmother was born, and which was once owned by pastoralist Howden Drake-Brockman. In the vicinity, they find a small network of Aboriginal relatives they had never known existed. For Morgan and her mother, who both had white fathers, the discovery of their part-Aboriginal descent is transformational.

> How deprived we would have been if we had been willing to let things stay as they were. We would have survived, but not as whole people. We would never have known our place ... We were different people now. What had begun as a tentative search for knowledge had grown into a spiritual and emotional pilgrimage. We had an Aboriginal consciousness now, and were proud of it.
>
> Mum, in particular, had been very deeply affected by the whole trip.
>
> 'To think I nearly missed all this. All my life, I've only been half a person. I don't think I really realized how much of me was missing until I came North.'[39]

Like Margaret Tucker's work, Sally Morgan and *My Place* were strongly influenced by their publisher. In Morgan's case this was Ray Coffey, the managing director of Fremantle Arts Centre Press. Coffey

[37] Victoria Laurie, 'Morgan's *My Place* "Hollow History" ', *The Australian*, 19 March 2004, p 3

[38] Sally Morgan, *My Place*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 1987, p 38

[39] Morgan, *My Place*, p 233

is listed in the book's preliminary pages as 'consultant editor'. *My Place* was part of a very successful publishing strategy developed by Coffey. Using literary grants allocated for the Western Australian Sesquicentenary in 1979, he emulated a model founded by left-wing activists in the London borough of Hackney in the 1970s, establishing a 'community publishing program' to record the experience of ordinary working people.

Soon after, Coffey was presented with some hand-written notes and a typescript about the life of bush worker and Gallipoli veteran Bert Facey. Much of the original material was not well written — Facey had been functionally illiterate until adulthood — and in many passages he seemed too conscious of being a writer. Coffey nonetheless saw potential in the work. He made contact and eventually recorded several interviews with Facey about various aspects of his life. He then merged the interview transcripts with the original material and, together with poet and children's author Wendy Jenkins, reworked it via some 'substantive editing' into the memoir *A Fortunate Life*. It became one of the biggest selling Australian books of all time.[40] Hence, although most readers took it to be the authentic autobiography of Facey, told in his own voice, it was actually a carefully crafted literary artifice — even the title that ironically expressed Facey's stoic attitude to adversity came from Coffey.[41]

Coffey has been quite open about his publishing ambitions and political connections. Before he joined the Fremantle Arts Centre Press he said his 'political interests were on the left with the Communist Party' and class politics. He resented the influence on literature of old establishment families like the Duracks in Western Australia: 'the big families, the pioneers that had gone on and made names for themselves, the literary canons'. His reference here was to

[40] Diane Brown, Publishing Culture: Commissioning Books in Australia, 1970–2000, PhD Thesis, Department of Communication, Language and Cultural Studies, Victoria University, 2003, p 51; Ray Coffey, unpublished address to Oral History Association of Western Australia, August 1987, Alexander Library, Perth, cited by Joan Newman, 'Reader Response to Transcribed Oral Narrative: *A Fortunate Life* and *My Place*,' *Southerly*, 4, 48, 1988, pp 376–89

[41] The title came not from a phrase of Facey's but from a question by Coffey during one of their interviews. Coffey asked: 'Looking back on everything, Bert, would you say you've had a fortunate life?' Joan Newman comments: 'Although Facey replied in the affirmative, one wonders if he would have used the phrase without such prompting. Such is an example of the directing influence of the interviewer in collecting oral material, an influence which is of even greater significance in this example as the interviewer was also to be the editor of the resulting publication.' Newman, 'Reader Response to Transcribed Oral Narrative', p 380

Mary Durack's monumental history of her family of Kimberley pastoralists, *Kings in Grass Castles* (1959) and its sequel *Sons in the Saddle* (1983). In their place, Coffey wanted to publish the social histories of the most marginal members of society, 'to develop their texts and teach them how to write and work with them editorially into publication'.[42] Sally Morgan fitted his plans perfectly. Just as in the 1930s, 1950s and 1960s the Communist Party had fostered the writings of Aboriginal women like Margaret Tucker, Kath Walker and Monica Clare, Coffey did the same with Morgan in the 1980s. He has described his relationship with the author:

> Sally had an idea to write her book and approached us with an idea. I met with her and we had a long conversation about how the book might be written and the kind of book it might be. She wanted to tell the story of her parents. During the initial conversation it was decided that the book should be constructed around her own story of discovering her Aboriginality ... We basically decided together through in-depth discussion on the outline of the book, the shape, the way in which her mother and her uncle and her grandmother's stories might be incorporated ... I felt straight away that if this book was written well, if it was constructed and developed in the right way, it would actually be the next big thing.[43]

Morgan's book tapped a burgeoning reader interest in ethnic identity, family history and, especially, spiritual and psychological self-realization. Given the prevailing culture's preoccupation with the self and self-transformative experiences, Morgan and her publisher bought into a well-established market. But to doubly ensure her book actually did become 'the next big thing', she and her editor also inserted other topics then in political vogue within left-wing political and intellectual circles. Despite the suburban tone of voice Morgan gave to the text, its characters could have come straight out of a neo-gothic melodrama from the Victorian era: a rich, sexually predatory white pastoralist not only seduces his female Aboriginal employees but commits incest with one of their offspring; Aboriginal pastoral workers are paid in rations not wages, and treated like slaves; a wealthy white Perth socialite ruthlessly exploits her perpetually loyal black servant; and several Aboriginal children are forcibly removed from loving parents to become members of the Stolen Generations. One of Morgan's themes had already proven its appeal within Australia's literary circles. In her 1929 novel *Coonardoo*, the Communist author Katherine Susannah Prichard portrayed the white owner of a cattle station in Western Australia's North-West district having sex with an Aboriginal housemaid and fathering, but never publicly acknowledg-

[42] Brown, Publishing Culture, pp 51, 129
[43] Brown, Publishing Culture, p 227

ing, her half-caste child. Prichard's book, long a staple of set texts in the education market, was still in print.[44] For Coffey, what made Morgan's proposal irresistible was that the villains of her piece were not fictional characters but members of one of the old pastoral families from the North-West, the Drake-Brockmans. Her book assaulted the reputation of the pastoral pioneers with a vengeance.

The later chapters of *My Place* reproduce the life stories of Morgan's grandmother Daisy Corunna, her mother Gladys Milroy, and her grandmother's brother Arthur Corunna. Their stories are told in passages of from 30 to 70 pages each, and read as if they were verbatim transcripts from tape-recorded interviews. All three claim to have been stolen children. When Morgan and Coffey put these stories together, they were obviously influenced by the recent success of Margaret Tucker's book *If Everyone Cared*, and the film *Lousy Little Sixpence*. The descriptions of child removal in *My Place* are very evocative of Tucker's account.

In the book, Morgan's grandmother Daisy claims she was the daughter of Howden Drake-Brockman and a full-blood Aboriginal woman Annie Padewani. When still a child she was removed from her mother at the Aboriginal camp on Corunna Downs station and sent to the homestead. There she was employed as a domestic servant, sweeping the verandahs, emptying the toilets, scrubbing pots and pans and the floor.

> Once I was working up the main house, I wasn't allowed down in the camp. If I had known that, I'd have stayed where I was. I couldn't sleep with my mother now and I wasn't allowed to play with all my old friends.
>
> That was the worst thing about working at the main house, not seeing my mother every day. I knew she missed me. She would walk up from the camp and call, 'Daisy, Daisy,' just like that. I couldn't talk to her, I had too much work to do.[45]

When Daisy was fourteen or fifteen years old, Howden Drake-Brockman and his wife Alice removed her from Corunna Downs station and took her to Perth. According to *My Place*, her employers kept their real intentions secret. They told Daisy's family they were sending her to school in Perth and that she would soon return, but they actually took her to be cook, nanny and general servant at the family's Perth residence. For the rest of her life Daisy remained bitter about the way her white employers deceived her.

[44] Katherine Susannah Prichard, *Coonardoo*, A&R Classics, HarperCollins, Sydney, 2002. Previous editions were published in 1929, 1956, 1961, 1964, 1973, 1975, 1990 and 1994.
[45] Morgan, *My Place*, p 331

> They told my mother I was goin' to get educated. They told all the people I was goin' to school. I thought it'd be good, goin' to school. I thought I'd be somebody real important. My mother wanted me to learn to read and write like white people. Then she wanted me to come back and teach her. There was a lot of the older people interested in learnin' how to read and write, then.
>
> Why did they tell my mother that lie? Why do white people tell so many lies? I got nothin' out of their promises. My mother wouldn't have let me go just to work. God will make them pay for their lies. He's got people like that under the whip. They should have told my mother the truth. She thought I was coming back.[46]

Even though Daisy says her mother and friends believed she would only be gone temporarily, Morgan presents the parting scene at Corunna Downs as a tragedy on the same scale as Margaret Tucker's permanent removal.

> When I left, I was cryin', all the people were cryin', my mother was cryin' and beatin' her head. Lily was cryin'. I called, 'Mum, Mum, Mum!'. She said, Don't forget me, Talahue!'
>
> They all thought I was coming back. I thought I'd only be gone a little while. I could hear their wailing for miles and miles. 'Talahue! Talahue!' They were singin' out my name, over and over. I couldn't stop cryin'. I kept callin', 'Mum, Mum!'[47]

According to *My Place*, Daisy's brother Arthur Corunna was also a stolen child. Because he was a half-caste Aboriginal — also allegedly the child of Howden Drake-Brockman and Annie Padewani — he and his half-brother Albert were removed from Corunna Downs and sent to the Swan Native and Half-Caste Mission near Perth. His story of his later life as bush worker and farmer bears an uncanny resemblance, in both tone and content, to the text of the publisher's earlier best-seller, *A Fortunate Life*.[48] Morgan portrays Arthur's removal from the station as an incident much like that of Daisy's, with the dialogue also precisely recalled 60 years later:

> They told my mother and the others we'd be back soon. We wouldn't be gone for long, they said ... I cried and cried, calling out to my mother, 'I don't want to go, I don't want to go!' She was my favourite. I loved her. I called, 'I want to stop with you, I want to stop with you!' I never saw her again.[49]

When Daisy grew older, she had a child of her own but it was removed from her soon after it was born. 'That was the way of it,

[46] Morgan, *My Place*, p 332
[47] Morgan, *My Place*, p 332
[48] Newman, 'Reader-Response to Transcribed Oral Narrative', pp 386–7
[49] Morgan, *My Place*, p 182

then. They took our children one way or another.' Her second child, Gladys (Sally Morgan's mother) was born in December 1927. Daisy was initially able to keep Gladys with her while an employee of the family. But when Gladys was three years old Alice Drake-Brockman allegedly forced Daisy to give her up.

> I was too frightened to say anythin'. I wanted to keep her here with me, she was all I had, but they didn't want her here. Alice said she cost too much to feed, said I was ungrateful. She was wantin' me to give up my own flesh and blood and still be grateful. Aren't black people allowed to have feelin's?[50]

Daisy was especially bitter because the Drake-Brockmans were so rich.

> In those days, the Drake-Brockmans were real upper class. They had money and people listened to them. Aah, the parties they had. I never seen such parties. The ladies' dresses were pretty and fancy ... I reckon they wasted their money, it was all that high livin'.[51]

Alice sent Gladys away to the Parkerville Children's Home on the far outskirts of Perth. Daisy recalled:

> I cried and cried when Alice took her away. Gladdie was too young to understand, she thought she was comin' back. She thought it was a picnic she was goin' on. I ran down to the wild bamboo near the river and I hid and cried and cried and cried. How can a mother lose a child like that? How could she do that to me?[52]

Even though Daisy was living in the same city as her daughter, the onerous demands of domestic service — seven days a week with only Sunday afternoons off, and no annual holidays — coupled with a government-imposed curfew against Aboriginal people travelling after dark, prevented her visiting Gladys at Parkerville. 'I remember some years,' Gladys recalls, 'when I only saw her twice at the Home.'[53] Even at a very young age — and 50 years *before* Peter Read invented the phrase 'stolen generations' — Gladys claims to have known she was stolen. At Parkerville, she claims the staff frequently screened motion pictures on this topic.

> Every Friday night we had pictures, silent movies. Often they were heart-rending tales about gypsies stealing a child from a family. I really identified

[50] Morgan, *My Place*, p 340
[51] Morgan, *My Place*, pp 335, 343
[52] Morgan, *My Place*, pp 340-1
[53] Morgan, *My Place*, p 250

with those films. We all did. I always thought of myself as the stolen child.[54]

One thinly veiled mystery of *My Place* is Gladys's paternity. Even though Daisy finally tells her life story to Sally Morgan, she declines to identify Gladys's father.

> Now how this all came about, that's my business. I'll only tell a little. Everyone knew who the father was, but they all pretended they didn't know. Aah, they knew, they knew. You didn't talk 'bout things, then. You hid the truth.[55]

However, she drops a very big hint by immediately going on to implicate Howden, her own father:

> Howden died not long after she was born. When I came home from hospital, he said, 'Bring her here, let me hold her.' He wanted to nurse Gladdie before he died.[56]

One noticeable absence from *My Place* is any photograph of three of the main characters, Daisy, Gladys and Arthur. In all the paperback editions and numerous reprints published for the high school and mass markets there is a picture of author Sally Morgan on the inside back flap of the book but no photographs of the other story-tellers. Only in the limited-edition, expensive, coffee-table book *Illustrated My Place*, published in 1989, are there any photographs of her and her family.

In a work of this kind aimed at a popular readership, the omission of photographs of Daisy, Gladys and Arthur is curious. Almost every other published family history from the past century contains copious photographs. That is a central part of their appeal. Unlike a novel, where readers have to imagine how the characters look, family histories can show you pictures of the real thing. As part of the book's promotion in 1987, the publisher recorded an interview with Morgan and her mother by author Mary Wright, who asked her about this omission.

> Mary: Yes, I was going to ask about photos. There was a conscious decision made, wasn't there, not to include photos, because it would then assume the mantle of some kind of social historical reference, when really it wasn't, it was an extension of the Aboriginal story-telling tradition?
>
> Sally: Yes, I'd prefer it was read like that.[57]

[54] Morgan, My Place, p 246
[55] Morgan, *My Place*, p 340
[56] Morgan, *My Place*, p 340
[57] Fremantle Arts Centre Press, *Our Authors*: An interview with Sally Morgan and Gladys Milroy, recorded 25 May 1987 by Marty Wright

A more plausible reason for her reticence becomes obvious once you see a picture of Daisy. The family memoir written by Judith Drake-Brockman in 2001, *Wongi Wongi*, contains six photographs of Daisy taken between her teenage years and middle age from 1921 to 1962. In all of them, her most striking physical feature is her thick, fuzzy hair. Indeed, she hardly looks like an Aboriginal woman at all. Wearing her hair in what was later called 'Afro' style, she looks decidedly Melanesian, very much like a native of New Guinea or Fiji. Judith Drake-Brockman recalled:

> Visitors to Claremont [the suburb of the family's Perth residence] often asked my parents where Daisy got her black, fuzzy hair. It was a question that later cropped up during my school years from my friends. My family felt it was no-one's business and Daisy especially hated any discussion of it.[58]

On its own, Daisy's physical appearance is quite enough to raise doubts over Sally Morgan's claim about Daisy's paternity. Morgan does discuss an alternative account but gives it short shrift. When Daisy tells her life story, she says:

> On the station, I went under the name Daisy Brockman. It wasn't till I was older that I took the name Corunna. Now, some people say my father wasn't Howden Drake-Brockman, they say he was this man from Malta. What can I say? I never heard 'bout this man from Malta before. I think that's a big joke.[59]

The 'man from Malta' was also known as Maltese Sam. When Sally Morgan was researching her book she contacted Judith Drake-Brockman, one of Howden and Alice's daughters. Judith said her mother had told her that Maltese Sam was Daisy's father, and also that the English station engineer on Corunna Downs, Jack Grime, was the father of Gladys. 'Everyone always said that Gladdie's the image of him.'[60] Alice Drake-Brockman also told Sally that Daisy's father was a man from Malta.[61] However, in her book when Sally questions Daisy's brother Arthur, he scorns these claims and insists that both his own and Daisy's father was Howden Drake-Brockman. 'Are you gunna take the word of white people against your own flesh and blood? ... I know because my mother, Annie, told me. She said Daisy and I belonged to one another. Don't you go takin' the word of white people against mine.'[62]

[58] Judith Drake-Brockman, *Wongi Wongi: To Speak*, Hesperian Press, Carlisle, 2001, p 26
[59] Morgan, *My Place*, p 325. See also discussion on pp 160–1
[60] Morgan, *My Place*, pp 154–5.
[61] Morgan, *My Place*, p 167
[62] Morgan, *My Place*, pp 157

When Sally and Gladys go looking for their Aboriginal ancestors in the north-west of the state, they test the claim that Maltese Sam might have been Daisy's father but the local Aborigines scotch the idea. ' "No, no, that's not right," said Roy. "You got that wrong", others chorused, "who told you that?" ... "We all knew Maltese, it's not him, be the wrong age ... Could have been the station owner. Plenty of black kids belong to them, but they don't own them." '[63] For Sally Morgan, their confidence and her own new-found Aboriginal identification settled the issue. Daisy's father was Howden.

However, in her book *Wongi Wongi*, Judith Drake-Brockman offers an account of Maltese Sam that is far more plausible. It explains Daisy's strikingly different appearance. Maltese Sam was the nickname of a man employed at Corunna Downs. He was a Torres Strait Islander — that is, a Melanesian man — who claimed he was descended on his father's side from a wealthy Maltese family. Judith records:

> Maltese Sam, the station cook, claimed to be Daisy's father. He came from the Torres Strait Islands and had a marvellous head of thick fuzzy hair. Sam loved Daisy very much and was very proud of her and she certainly looked like him with her black, tight, fuzzy hair, not seen in the Australian Aborigine. She also had the facial features of these Islands, from whence Maltese Sam came.[64]

Wongi Wongi disputes not only the fanciful paternity Morgan ascribes to Daisy and Gladys but undermines almost every other major interpretation that Morgan uses to construct her family melodrama. For a start, the dramatic scenes of Daisy's apparently permanent removal from Corunna Downs to Perth in 1920 had one critical omission. Morgan neglected to tell her readers that Daisy returned home in less than twelve months. Indeed, each year in the early 1920s the Drake-Brockman family and their nanny returned to Corunna Downs regularly. They lived on the station for six or seven months of the year, while the children were educated by correspondence school, and spent the hot summer months from October to March in Perth. In other words, until she was at least eighteen years old, the 'stolen' Daisy spent several months of each year living on the same station as her mother.[65]

Morgan's portrait of wealthy socialites exploiting their poor black servant while they partied in fine dresses is also the opposite of the truth. For much of Daisy's four-decade employment by the family, Alice Drake-Brockman was a widow who lived by renting out rooms in her home because the family was bankrupt.

[63] Morgan, *My Place*, p 223
[64] Drake-Brockman, *Wongi Wongi*, p 25
[65] Drake-Brockman, *Wongi Wongi*, pp 30–1

Howden Drake-Brockman sold the profitable Corunna Downs in 1923 and, in a fatal miscalculation, bought a partnership in two properties, Towera and Lyndon stations, on the Yannarie and Lyndon Rivers, north-east of the port of Carnarvon. In 1925, he sold their previous Perth home and bought Ivanhoe, a grand house in the suburb of Claremont. However, the drought of the late 1920s ruined him. By 1927, his rivers were dry, his sheep were dead, he had no income, and he could not pay his accumulated debts to stock and station agents Dalgety. In October that year Howden suffered a stroke that half-paralysed him and rendered him speechless. He was transferred to Carnarvon Hospital and then to Perth where he died in January 1928. In April 1929 Dalgety foreclosed on its debt and resumed the stations. At Towera, Alice Drake-Brockman packed her remaining possessions into the family car and, with her children, drove the 1280 kilometres of dirt tracks and unsealed roads back to Perth.[66]

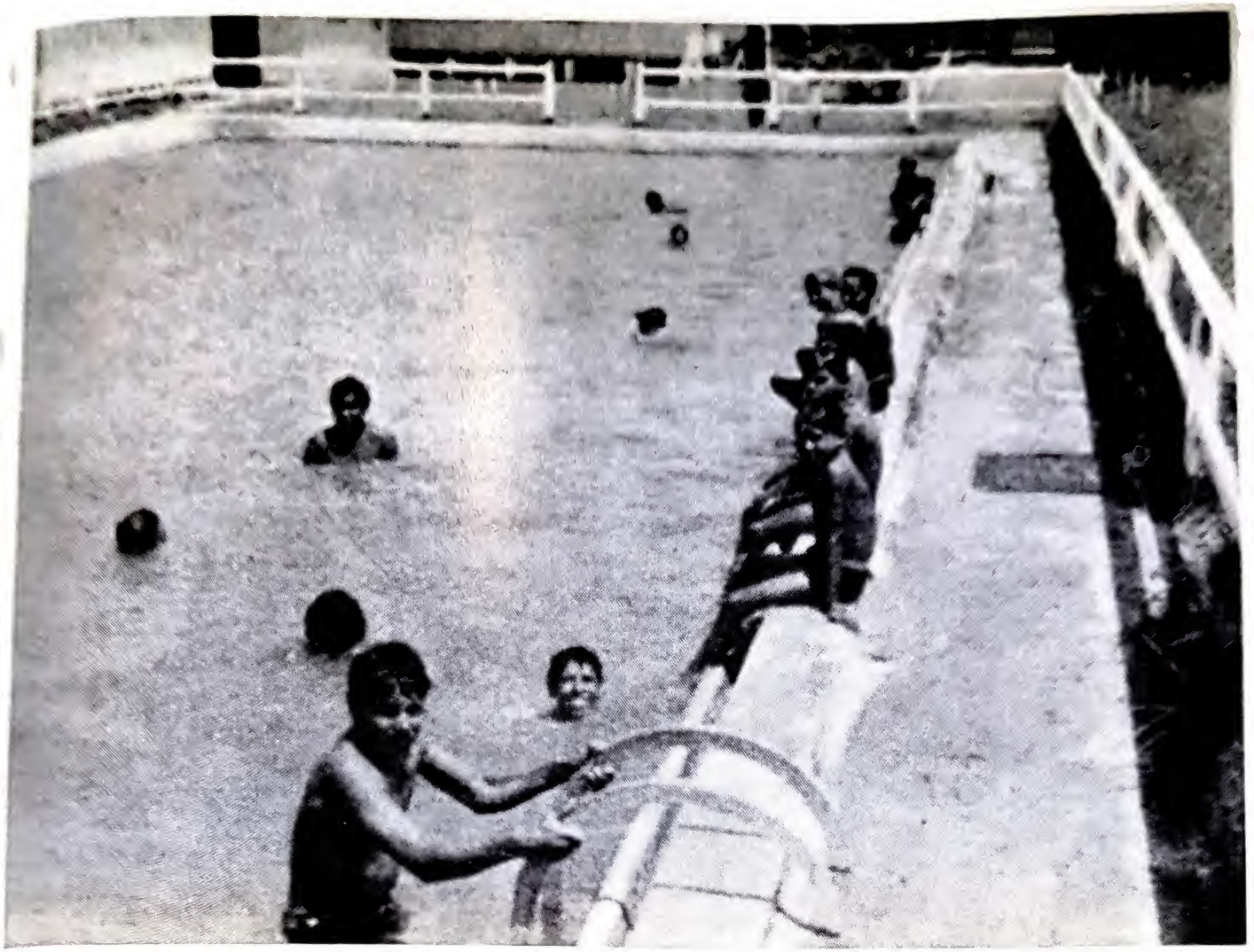
The one thing that preserved some family income was the fact that Ivanhoe, their home in Perth, had been put in Alice's name and was beyond the legal reach of Dalgety's proceedings against her husband. She survived the Depression of the 1930s and educated her children by converting Ivanhoe first into a boarding house, providing food and bed for lodgers, and then dividing it into flats and renting them out.

Daisy remained with her for the next three decades as nanny to the four children, as co-worker, companion and family friend. 'I have always considered I had two mothers,' Judith Drake-Brockman wrote, 'one white and one black ... How I loved her; how we all did ... So revered was Daisy by us children that we were never rude to her, spoke back to her or argued with her.'[67] She dedicated *Wongi Wongi* to 'the memory of my darling mother, Alice Gertrude Drake-Brockman, to my beloved nanny, Daisy Corunna.' In 1935, Daisy refused a suitor's offer of marriage to stay with the family.

Sally Morgan portrayed Daisy as a domestic slave: 'I did all the work at Ivanhoe — cleaning, the washing, the ironing — there was nothing I didn't do. From when I got up in the morning till when I went to sleep at night, I worked.'[68] But this accusation infuriates the Drake-Brockman family. Its members insist Daisy's primary responsibility was caring for the children. Any additional tasks she shared with Alice. The children also had compulsory household chores. Judith wrote:

> Mum, who made all our clothes, including school blazers, had taught Daisy over the years to cut out and machine and needlework. And Daisy

[66] Drake-Brockman, *Wongi Wongi*, pp 31–3, 54–75
[67] Drake-Brockman, *Wongi Wongi*, pp 25, 82, 84
[68] Morgan, *My Place*, p 334



Despite claims by historians that Aboriginal children's institutions were bleak houses with sterile environments, Kinchela Boys' Home was a 32–acre former dairy farm with quality buildings and attractive grounds. In 1948, it got an Olympic-size swimming pool and gymnasium at a time of post-war austerity when few city suburbs or country towns enjoyed such amenities. (NSW Aborigines Welfare Board Annual Report 1950.)





The worst institutional facilities for Aboriginal children were in Western Australia where government funding was only a fraction of eastern states. Most children at Carrolup Settlement, above, and the Moore River Settlement, below, went there with their parents. Despite the notorious reputation it earned from the film Rabbit-Proof Fence, *between 1915 and 1940 an average of only ten 'unattached' children were sent to Moore River each year. (Photographs State Library of Western Australia.)*



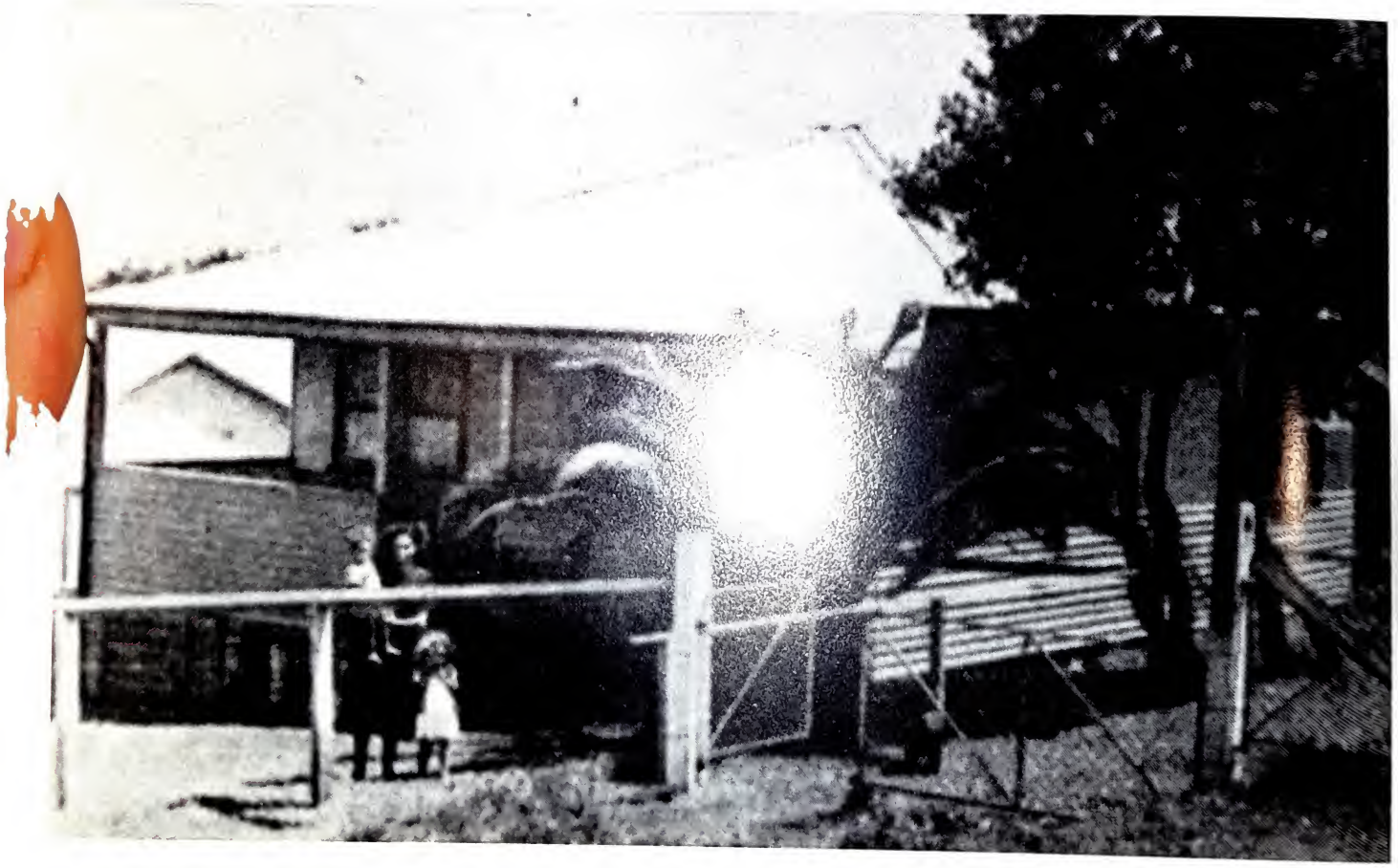


The New South Wales government provided twenty times more places for Aboriginal children at schools than in welfare institutions. In 1900 this school building at Grafton, above, and its teacher were put on show in the Aborigines Protection Board's annual report. Below is Brewarrina Aboriginal Station in 1900, also displayed in the board's annual report that year.



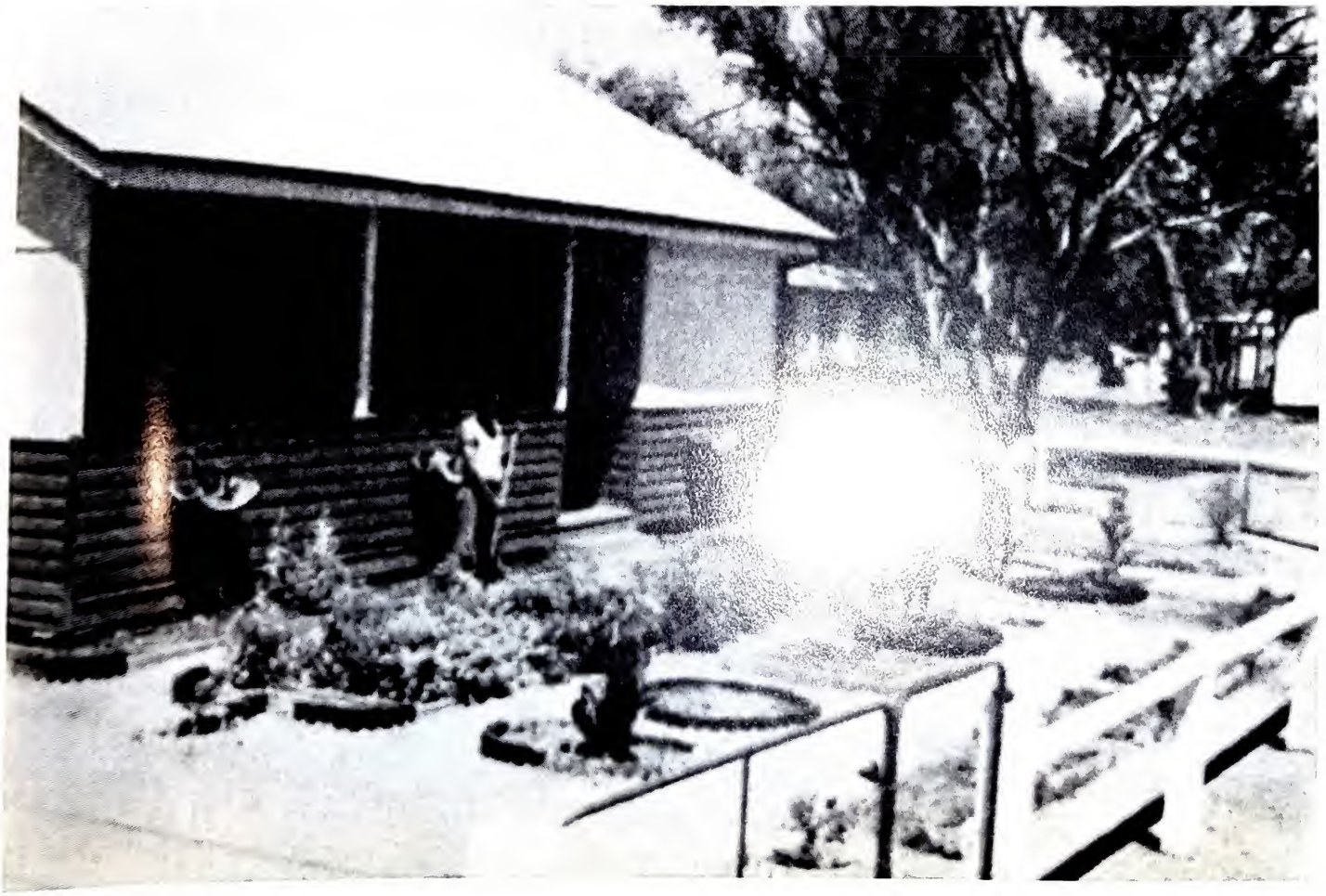


The ten children and matron of the Warangesda Aboriginal Station's girls' dormitory in 1900, above. Their little home has been wrongly portrayed by historians as the major institution that housed Stolen Generations in this period. (NSW Aborigines Protection Board Annual Report, 1900). Below is a cottage on the La Perouse Reserve in 1950 similar to dwellings of white suburbanites at the time (Aborigines Welfare Board, 1950).





In 1950, the Murrin Bridge Aboriginal Station provided Aboriginal residents with a standard of living similar to most white country town dwellers in New South Wales. Children grew up there with their parents and went to the local Aboriginal school (NSW Aborigines Welfare Board, Annual Report 1950).





In Western Australia in the 1920s and 1930s, the Moore River Settlement housed children in dormitories like this one. According to journalist Paul Hasluck: 'The setting was a poor one with no advantage for anyone except isolation. The facilities were limited and some of them were makeshift. The staff were inadequate both in numbers and qualification. The inmates disliked the place. It held no promise of a future for any of them and they had little or no satisfaction in the present. It was a dump.' (Photograph State Library of Western Australia.)



According to Sally Morgan's book My Place, *Daisy Corunna was removed from her mother's care on Corunna Downs in the North-West of Western Australia and sent to Perth to work for the Drake-Brockman family as a long-exploited domestic servant. However, according to Judith Drake-Brockman's book* Wongi Wongi, *each year in the early 1920s Daisy returned for several months with the family to Corunna Downs where she was employed as the children's nanny. Moreover, in this photograph of her at the time, Daisy's thick fuzzy hair clearly supports the notion that her father was a Melanesian man and not Howden Drake-Brockman, as Morgan's book claims. (Photograph courtesy of Drake-Brockman family.)*

> had a natural seamstress's artistry ... We [the children] all had our jobs on Saturday mornings. We did the bathroom, the verahdahs and, of course, the brasso-ing. No work, no pocket money, no swim. We had to make our beds and pick up our clothes ... Mum and Daisy shared the housework, but Mum did not wash and iron. On these days when Daisy washed, Mum cleaned and polished the floors ... Mum and Daisy were both great cooks and enjoyed sharing the cooking. Mum had taught Daisy cooking and she developed a level of skill you only achieve if you derive satisfaction from it. Daisy invented several recipes.[69]

This is not the portrait of a relationship that even slightly resembles slavery, and it transcends that of mistress and servant. It is the story of two women jointly struggling through the 1930s Depression to make a living, preserve a household, and bring up children in as genteel a manner as possible under the circumstances. Rather than an inferior black servant, Daisy was one of the family. Moreover, the family's precarious finances were something the real Daisy must have known very well, unlike the aggrieved and resentful version of Daisy that Morgan created.

As for the scene described in *My Place* in which Howden asks to hold Gladys, his newborn 'daughter', Judith argues it not only did not happen, but it could not have happened. At the time, Howden was bedridden after suffering his stroke. He was half-paralysed, comatose and unable to speak. He was physically incapable of either asking for or holding Gladys. He died only six weeks after she was born and never knew of her existence.[70]

In short, Judith describes the allegations of exploitation in *My Place* as 'a fiction of our relationship and a caricature of history'.[71] In 2004, she said in a television interview:

> Made me feel disgusted and sick and I thought, 'Why would someone want to do that? Why would anyone really want to make up yarns like that to pull someone down? What's in their make-up to want to do that? ... It hurt me to think that she could write such absolute, fabricated tripe about our family. Of course it hurt.[72]

Apart from the defamation of Judith's father, she said Morgan's worst offence was to create a version of her own grandmother that never existed in real life. 'Sally's book creates a new Daisy, a Daisy that fitted the stereotype of "poor fella black". This was not the Daisy I knew for 63 years.' Judith argued the text of Daisy's story in *My*

[69] Drake-Brockman, *Wongi Wongi*, pp 82, 95
[70] Drake-Brockman, *Wongi Wongi*, p 55
[71] Drake-Brockman, *Wongi Wongi*, p 135
[72] Judith Drake-Brockman, television interview with Helen Dalley, 'Sally Morgan: Claims of Fabrication', *Sunday*, Nine Network, 21 March 2004

Place could not be what it pretended to be, a verbatim transcript of a tape recording. Daisy did not speak like that.

> Daisy spoke as I speak. After all, she trained me. Neither she nor I left or leave the ending 'g' off our words as 'comin' and 'goin' and 'askin' as Sally's Daisy does in chapter after chapter.[73]

There is support for Judith's version in the investigations of Western Australian Aborigines made in the mid-1930s by the then journalist Paul Hasluck. For a series of newspaper articles, Hasluck spoke to almost every part-Aboriginal adult in the 'Great Southern' districts of the state. He found they all spoke correct English, even if they had not been to school, and that the middle-aged spoke better than the young. 'Among the older men and women, the pronunciation of English was often better, the vocabulary more extensive and expression easier than among white Australian outdoor workers.' He ascribed their ability to the fact that many had, like Daisy, lived at the homesteads of 'the more substantial farmers' as domestic servants and handymen and, through this close association, had picked up by imitation their speech patterns.[74]

Judith also denies the veracity of the three separations of the 'stolen children' described so graphically in *My Place*. She says that neither Daisy, nor Arthur, nor Gladys were removed from their parents in anything like the dramatic scenes portrayed by Morgan. In Judith's versions of their parting from their families, none of them suffered any trauma. When she was fifteen, Daisy was invited to go to Perth:

> A few months later Mum was pregnant and knew it was time to depart for home in Claremont. Father booked their passage on the next ship from Port Hedland.
>
> Before departing, Mum asked Annie if her daughter Daisy would like to come south with them and return next year after the baby was born.
>
> Annie confided in Mum that she would like her girl to leave the station because she was worried that Daisy's father, Maltese Sam, had been saying 'I want to take my girl to Malta.'[75]

Arthur's story about being removed to the Swan Native and Half-Caste Mission because he was a half-caste Aborigine was also untrue. According to Judith, he left home voluntarily, aged fourteen, to look for work. As an old man, he used to visit Daisy often:

> He never stopped talking and arguing with her [Daisy] and made up such unbelievable stories to the extent she couldn't believe a word he said. His stories about the Nor'West were not true and it made her so cross for, as

[73] Drake-Brockman, *Wongi Wongi*, p 138
[74] Hasluck, *Shades of Darkness*, p 37
[75] Drake-Brockman, *Wongi Wongi*, p 23

> she said, he was only 14 when he left with some itinerant workers. He didn't want to stay on the station and we lost track of him for a long time.[76]

Most of all, the surviving family members protest about *My Place*'s account of Gladys's removal and her lonely years of isolation at Parkerville. At the time, children like Gladys, whether white or black, who had no father to support them could be removed by government welfare officers. Paul Hasluck has described the prevailing attitude to all illegitimate children in Western Australia in the 1930s.

> There was a tendency to regard any child born out of wedlock as likely to become a neglected child. And it was unusual for unmarried mothers to wish to set up their own household as 'single parents'. If they did not wish to part from the child some device was usually sought to mask its illegitimacy. The social pressures on the unmarried mother were all in the direction of parting her from the child, placing it with foster parents, or committing it to the care of the state to be reared in an orphanage. It was thought to be in the interests of the child that it was seen as an orphan rather than as a bastard.[77]

Alice Drake-Brockman did not want to risk Daisy's daughter being removed to a distant welfare institution. After consulting an old friend, an Anglican nun, they enrolled Gladys at Parkerville, a boarding school for needy children run by another Anglican nun, Sister Kate Clutterbuck.[78] When Gladys was enrolled at Parkerville in 1930 it was *not* an institution devoted to part-Aboriginal children. It had been founded in 1902 as a home for orphaned and unwanted white babies but evolved into a school for older children, especially those of single mothers or those neglected by parents. In the 1920s and early 1930s, it occasionally took in part-Aboriginal children who fitted this profile, but the great majority were always white.[79]

In other words, Gladys went to Parkerville not because of her Aboriginal ancestry but because her mother was unmarried. In an era when there were no welfare payments for single mothers like Daisy, many white children in Gladys's position grew up in institutions of the same kind.

It was not until 1934, some four years after Gladys enrolled at Parkerville, that Sister Kate made an agreement with the state's Chief Protector of Aborigines, A. O. Neville, and established a quite sepa-

[76] Drake-Brockman, *Wongi Wongi*, p 101

[77] Paul Hasluck, *Shades of Darkness: Aboriginal Affairs 1925–1965*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1988, p 16

[78] Drake-Brockman, *Wongi Wongi*, p 98

[79] Vera Whittington, *Sister Kate: A Life Dedicated to Children in Need of Care*, University of Western Australia Press, 1999, Chapters 5 and 10

rate institution at Queen's Park for quarter-caste Aboriginal children in need of care.[80] The home at Queen's Park, which like the first school at Parkerville was also known as 'Sister Kate's', is identified in the *Bringing Them Home* report as one of the places established to house the Stolen Generations.[81] But Gladys never went to Queen's Park. *My Place* does record this. Gladys recalled:

> When I was still quite young, Sister Kate left Parkerville and took a lot of Aboriginal children with her. I was very sad because I lost a lot of my friends. There were a few lightly coloured Aboriginal boys left and they kept an eye on me. I don't know why I wasn't sent with Sister Kate, maybe it was because of the Drake-Brockmans, I don't know.[82]

However, Sally Morgan did not spell out for her readers the full implication of this admission that her mother was never in an institution for Aboriginal children. Lacking this information, most of the generations of students who read *My Place* have been led to believe Gladys's school was part of a government program to assimilate Aboriginal children. The truth is that Gladys spent all her school days at Parkerville, where at any one time, out of its normal enrolment of about 100 children, only a handful were of Aboriginal descent. In short, Gladys's schooling had nothing to do with race. Sally Morgan's attempt to fit her mother's upbringing into the narrative of the Stolen Generations is an exercise in creative licence.

At the time, the Drake-Brockman family regarded Gladys as a pupil at a charitable boarding school. Alice paid Gladys's weekly school fees of two shillings and six pence for the next eleven years, until she reached the school leaving age of fourteen.[83] The family is contemptuous of *My Place*'s account of a lonely little girl who hardly saw her mother from one year to the next. Judith remembers going on frequent and sometimes very long visits to see Gladys.

> Parkerville was one of my family's favourite picnic spots. Almost every Sunday in the winter we would pick up Glady and go off into the bush for a chop picnic, fruit, cakes and billy tea. In the summer, Daisy went every second Sunday, often with June [Drake-Brockman] or me for company ...
>
> On two occasions Mum drove Dais and June to Parkerville to spend a couple of weeks during the May school holidays. Loaded with suitcases and tins of cake they stayed together in one of the cottages and took their meals in one of the dining rooms with the children and staff. Gladys came to sleep with them during their stay. She was free to come and go for

[80] Whittington, *Sister Kate*, pp 306–10
[81] *Bringing Them Home*, p 110, and map p 105
[82] *My Place*, p 251
[83] Drake-Brockman, *Wongi Wongi*, pp 111–12

walks and to take afternoon tea with them and June joined in playing with the children.[84]

Judith's sister June confirmed this version of events in a television interview:

June Young: We used to have wonderful picnics, go with Daisy with cakes for Glad. I used to go up and stay at Parkerville Home with her. Daisy and I would pack a hamper, and would take us all weekend to pack the hamper, and we'd walk up, trudge up the hill to Parkerville Home, Sister Kate's , as they called it, with all this — absolutely laden with food — and then we'd meet Gladdie, and that happened regularly.

Helen Dalley: Was she ever angry that she felt dumped by her mum?

June Young: No, because she wasn't dumped — she was put to school.[85]

This last comment is taken from a 2004 television story on the Nine Network's current affairs program *Sunday*. The program's producers made several requests to Sally Morgan and her mother Gladys to appear and respond to the Drake-Brockmans. They also approached Fremantle Arts Centre Press to answer questions as well. Both Morgan and her publisher declined. Although the Drake-Brockman sisters agreed to be interviewed by Morgan when she was researching *My Place*, Morgan refused to discuss the content of *Wongi Wongi* with them, either publicly or privately. She said: 'We respect the right of others to hold different views to ourselves, but my family does not wish to participate in the program.' The Drake-Brockman family wrote to Morgan suggesting that at least one question, that of Gladys's paternity, could now be resolved by technology. They wanted Gladys and Sally to take a DNA test to see if they were really genetically related to them. But neither Morgan nor her mother replied.

This is not a satisfactory response by a person in Morgan's position. She is a publicly employed academic whose published work should be publicly accountable. She is a full professor of the Graduate Research School at the University of Western Australia and Director of its Centre for Indigenous History and the Arts. Morgan's only formal academic qualifications are in psychology, not history. Apart from *My Place*, she has no other major work of scholarship to her credit. Her other works are children's books and a biography of the Pilbara dis-

[84] Drake-Brockman, *Wongi Wongi*, p 98

[85] June Young [nee Drake-Brockman], television interview with Helen Dalley, 'Sally Morgan: Claims of Fabrication', *Sunday*, Nine Network, 21 March 2004

trict identity Jack McPhee.[86] She clearly gained her academic appointment primarily on the strength of the impact made by *My Place*. Moreover, her younger sister Jill Milroy was subsequently appointed to a position at the same university, where she is now Dean of the School of Indigenous Studies. Since a DNA test would resolve one of the book's central points of contention, since Morgan's academic position is publicly funded, and since state education syllabuses around Australia require thousands of students to read her book, , the issue can hardly be treated as something only between the families. Nor can the Drake-Brockmans' objections be dismissed on the grounds that everyone is entitled to their own opinions about these subjects. Morgan's public position obliges her to accept the responsibility to defend her work.

Morgan should also place the original tape recordings of her interviews with Daisy, Gladys and Arthur in a public library or archive so that other researchers can both double-check the accuracy of her version of their content. Indeed, oral history cannot become a credible scholarly discipline until all those involved put their original recordings on the public record so they can be reviewed by others. Given the confronting and, in so many cases, convincing arguments put by Judith Drake-Brockman against the central theses of *My Place*, Morgan clearly has a case to answer.

In one of the first literary reviews to celebrate *My Place*, Nene Gare in 1987 wrote in the journal *Westerly*:

> This book should, at long last, penetrate the thick skin of all Australian settlers and suburbanites. It should bring home to them — to us — all who are living comfortably and contentedly on their land — how miserably we have failed the original settlers.[87]

One can only speculate how many thousands of times in the subsequent two decades those lines, or something very much like them, have been regurgitated in school essays and university assignments. It is quite possible, however, to take a totally different view of this story, especially if we try to look through the eyes of Daisy Corunna, as glimpsed occasionally in *My Place* but seen much more clearly in *Wongi Wongi*.

From her perspective as a grandmother, and later as great-grandmother, Daisy must eventually have been very pleased with herself. She produced only one surviving daughter but, by remaining employed with the Drake-Brockman family in Perth throughout the 1930s, she ensured not only that Gladys escaped the attention of A.

[86] *Wanamurraganya: The Story of Jack McPhee*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 1989

[87] Nene Gare, review of *My Place*, *Westerly*, 3, 1987, pp 80–1

O. Neville but gained an education that provided her entry to employment in the Perth retail sector. Daisy saw her daughter work her way up to become a successful small-businesswoman (owner-manager of a florist shop in Perth's leading department store) and the mother of five children. Two of Daisy's grand-daughters gained university degrees and academic careers. Her five grandchildren went on to produce several more great-grandchildren for her. She came a long way from the blacks' camp at Corunna Downs.

None of the literary reviews and historical theorizing I have seen about this book attribute any value to this kind of social mobility within white society, nor recognize the gratification provided by the establishment of so substantial a line of progeny. The only people of Aboriginal descent praised by academics are those who present themselves as either antagonists or victims of white society.

Yet Daisy's life story, when read in terms of the deeply human aspirations most of us have for the social and reproductive achievements of our offspring, deserves to be seen as a considerable success within the terms she set herself. While such sentiments do not fit contemporary academic theories about the appropriate motivation and character of Aboriginal people, they are no less real for that. Rather than a tragedy of white racists stealing children and exploiting Aboriginality, the real Daisy's story was one of fulfilment within white society. In her maturity, when she could take a long view of the course of her life, she must have been more than satisfied with what she accomplished.

THE 'TRUE HISTORY' OF LOIS O'DONOGHUE

> On an earlier occasion in May 1990 when I was having one of my first meetings with her, the conversation turned to the children who had been taken from their families. Lois had just said quietly, 'I was one of those children'. Now, in the Cabinet room, she told her personal history. She was not grandstanding or dwelling on the past. She was simply telling Cabinet about the true history of this country and the terrible toll inflicted on Aboriginal families by those forced separations, so graphically illustrated by the report *Bringing Them Home*. This was Australian history in the making. Aboriginal people telling the Cabinet what they needed to be reminded of. You could have heard a pin drop. The only other occasion I have seen Cabinet ministers so affected was in the presence of Nelson Mandela.
>
> — Former Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Robert Tickner, on an address by Aborigines to the Labor government Cabinet, March 1991[88]

[88] Robert Tickner, *Taking a Stand: Land Rights to Reconciliation*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2001, p 54

> One deeply traumatic and life-altering event was, of course, being taken from my mother at the age of two, along with my sisters Vi and Amy. My brother Geoffrey and eldest sister Eileen had been taken years earlier ... It is now widely admitted that, *even by the standards of the time*, these actions were contrary to common law and in breach of human rights obligations.
>
> — Lowitja (Lois) O'Donoghue, 2000 (her emphasis)[89]

> Those of us of the stolen generations ...
>
> — Lowitja O'Donoghue, part of statement on Nine Network news, welcoming Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's apology to the Stolen Generations, 31 January 2008

By the time Lois O'Donoghue was telling her story to federal Cabinet in 1991, she had discovered many of the details about her family background and why she had been 'taken' from her parents in 1934. Although she was never reunited with her father, she had found her mother in the 1960s at Oodnadatta in the north of South Australia and had also kept in contact with some of her siblings. One of the most poignant moments in O'Donoghue's account of her life was her reunion with her mother. The daughter had been removed at two years of age, before she could speak her Aboriginal language, and the mother had never learnt to speak English, so the two could only express their emotions about the passage of the years through an interpreter.

Lois O'Donoghue grew up in the Colebrook Home for Children at Quorn and, later, Eden Hills in South Australia from 1934 to 1948. Her brother and three of her four sisters also spent most of their childhood in the home. Although her only training was in domestic service, Lois went on to become the most prominent Aboriginal woman of her generation. She rose through a career in nursing to enter the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs, where she became regional director for South Australia. She was Australian of the Year in 1984 and served as inaugural chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission from 1990 to 1996.

Her white father Tom O'Donoghue was the joint lessee with his brother Mick of two pastoral leaseholds, Granite Downs and De Rose Hill, a total of 2500 square kilometres in poor, spinifex country in the far north of the state near the Everard Ranges. Soon after he arrived from Adelaide in 1920, Tom formed a long-term relationship with a local full-blood Aboriginal woman named Lily. They lived in a mud brick hut on De Rose Hill station and had six children between 1924

[89] Lowitja O'Donoghue, 'A Journey of Healing or a Road to Nowhere?', in Michelle Grattan, ed., *Reconciliation: Essays on Australian Reconciliation*, Black Inc, Melbourne, 2000, pp 289–90

and 1935. Lowitja was born in 1932 at Agnes Creek, close to the present day Stuart Highway, near the Northern Territory border. Her parents remained together until 1940 when the South Australian government amended the Aborigines Act to punish white men who were 'habitually consorting' or sexually preying upon Aboriginal women. Tom O'Donoghue was convicted of having carnal knowledge of Lily and fined £5 with 10 shillings costs. Soon after, he sold up his interest in De Rose Hill station, abandoned his de facto wife of twenty years, and moved back to Adelaide. Lily went to Oodnadatta where her daughter eventually found her living in a corrugated iron humpy on the edge of town.[90]

In 1944, the Colebrook Home for Children moved from Quorn in the Flinders Ranges to Eden Hills on the outskirts of Adelaide. Although in the 1930s it accommodated 50 children, by the 1970s its numbers had fallen to only ten children, and in 1981 it closed down altogether. Since its founding by the United Aborigines Mission in 1926, some 350 children had passed through it.[91]

The mission subsequently deposited its records in the State Library of South Australia. In 2001, journalist Andrew Bolt read the documents related to O'Donoghue, her brother and sisters. They said her oldest sister Eileen and brother Geoffrey had been admitted to the Colebrook Home's receiving station at Oodnadatta in March 1927. The records said they were 'living with parents until their father brought children to mission home at Oodnadatta ... both parents living, but not living together.' The records said that Lois, as she was christened by the missionaries, was admitted to Colebrook aged two in September 1934, the same year as two of her sisters Violet and Amy, but they did not say why she was admitted or by whom. Andrew Bolt contacted O'Donoghue and interviewed her about the content of the records. He put to her that it appeared the children had been placed with the mission by their white father. Bolt's subsequent story appeared on the front page of the Melbourne *Herald Sun* newspaper. Under the headline 'I Wasn't Stolen', Bolt wrote:

> Lowitja O'Donoghue — the nation's most honoured Aboriginal leader — admitted yesterday she had misled Australians by claiming she was a stolen child.
>
> 'I don't like the word "stolen" and it's perhaps true that I've used the word loosely at times,' a crying Dr O'Donoghue told the *Herald Sun*.
>
> 'I would see myself as a removed child and not necessarily stolen.'

[90] Stuart Rintoul, 'Going Home', *Australian Magazine, The Weekend Australian*, 21–22 April 2001, p 14

[91] Christobel Mattingly and Ken Hampton, eds., *Survival in Our Own Land: Aboriginal Experiences in 'South Australia' Since 1836*, Hodder & Stoughton, Sydney, 1992, p 219

> Asked whether it would be better to state clearly that she wasn't a member of the stolen generation, Dr O'Donoghue said: 'I am prepared to make that concession.'
>
> And she called on Aboriginal activists to stop using the phrase 'stolen generation' and to drop legal claims for compensation.
>
> 'Stop saying stolen, start saying removal, and say there were degrees of people being removed (from their parents).'[92]

The story became a media sensation. It was picked up by news bulletins across the country in press, radio and television, especially after O'Donoghue appeared on Nine Network television the same night, tearfully agreeing that she had used the word 'stolen' loosely at times but also criticizing Bolt for his article, which she called 'simplistic, sensationalist, misleading and mischievous'. Newspaper headlines included the *Daily Telegraph*: 'I Haven't Sold Out', *Sydney Morning Herald*: ''Blacks Vent "Stolen" Thunder', *The Australian*: 'O'Donoghue's Tears of Regret'. Prime Minister John Howard told a Melbourne radio station: 'What she has said is highly significant, but I don't want to dwell upon it too much because that would be painful for her. It's time to stop this navel-gazing about the past.' Under the heading 'Sad Semantics Betray the Stolen Children', *The Australian* editorialized: 'It is sad that Lowitja O'Donoghue's naivety, neglect or misinformation has allowed the debate about reconciliation to be reduced once again to semantics' but still argued: 'This stolen generation deserves an apology: we are sorry that it happened and we are sorry that you suffered.'[93] In a written press statement released later on the day that Bolt's story appeared, O'Donoghue said:

> For my own personal circumstances, in which my white father appears (as far as I know) to have relinquished his five children, I now prefer to use the term 'removed'. I have always tried to represent this situation accurately to the public, to the best of my limited knowledge, for I was only two years of age at the time. I absolutely understand and respect that for many others the term 'stolen' more accurately describes their circumstances.
>
> I know that my Aboriginal mother would have had no legal recourse, nor any moral support, in resisting our removal. I also know that her grief was unbearable. Our removal would have been seen as consistent with the policies of the time which effectively sought to erase or assimilate the Aboriginal population ...

[92] Andrew Bolt, 'I Wasn't Stolen: Aboriginal Leader's Shock Admission', *Herald Sun*, 23 February 2001, p1

[93] Media coverage mentioned here comes from *Daily Telegraph*, Sydney, 24 February 2001, p 5; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 February 2001, p 4; *Weekend Australian*, 24–25 February 2001, pp 1, 4, 18

> I deeply regret that some subtle distinctions I made in a lengthy and manipulative interview have been taken out of context and distorted by Andrew Bolt and the Murdoch press.[94]

Andrew Bolt himself became part of the story. There were lengthy profiles devoted to him and his journalism by Patrick Carlyon in *The Bulletin* and Andrew Dodd in *The Australian*.[95] However, apart from Paddy McGuinness in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, few journalists openly endorsed Bolt's action.[96] Indeed, in *The Australian*, Stuart Rintoul treated the story as beneath contempt:

> A long campaign to discredit the idea of stolen generations of Aboriginal people took a low turn yesterday, and one which does nothing to devalue the need for an apology to Aboriginal people or compensation for a great wrong ... The tragedy of Aboriginal history has taken another turn towards bashing the victim.[97]

Coming from Rintoul, these comments were not surprising, given that he was the author in 1993 of *The Wailing*, a collection of oral histories of Aboriginal children removed from their parents.[98] He had subsequently written a great deal about the subject in the press, always on the side of an apology and compensation for those affected.

Yet, after the media dust settled, Rintoul turned out to be the writer who actually provided the most credible confirmation that Bolt was right about O'Donoghue's past. Two months after Bolt's story made the front page, Rintoul wrote a long piece for *The Australian Magazine*, an insert of the *Weekend Australian* newspaper.[99] He had accompanied O'Donoghue back to the district of her birth and had investigated the circumstances of her removal. He interviewed Aborigines, white rural workers and pastoralists who had lived there in the 1930s. He also searched the United Aborigines Mission records in the State Library and double-checked Bolt's version of the placement of the O'Donoghue children in the Colebrook Home. Rintoul produced by far the best and most thorough piece of journalism on the

[94] 'Press Release, Professor [*sic*] Lowitja O'Donoghue', Friday 23 February 2001, reproduced in full in *Australian Rationalist*, 56, Summer 2000 [*sic*], p 4

[95] Patrick Carlyon, 'Lightning Bolt', *The Bulletin*, 7 March 2001; Andrew Dodd, 'Burnt by a Bolt out for a Blue', *The Australian*, Media section, 15–21 March 2001, p 3

[96] P. P. McGuinness, 'An Inventor Fumbles to Maintain the Fable', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 February 2001, p 34

[97] Stuart Rintoul, 'Ugly Attempt to Bash the Victim', *Weekend Australian*, 24–25 February 2001, p 4

[98] Stuart Rintoul, *The Wailing: A National Black Oral History*, William Heinemann, Melbourne, 1993

[99] Rintoul, 'Going Home', pp 12-17

whole affair. Indeed, when Australia's most knowledgeable academic author on Aboriginal affairs, Josephine Flood, produced a new textbook for undergraduate students in 2006, she took her information about O'Donoghue's removal straight from Rintoul's article.[100] The story was as follows:

From the late 1920s to the mid-1930s, much of the Australian continent was stricken by drought. Tom O'Donoghue's leaseholds were on the north-eastern edge of the Great Victoria Desert. His properties were marginal even in the best of years. He had no stock and was reduced to trading dingo scalps with the Aborigines. In dry periods the country could not sustain its population. According to settler Doug Fuller, in the early 1930s 'even the lizards were starving to death'. When Aboriginal women discovered that missionaries would take care of half-caste children, they 'would wait on the side of the road for the mail truck to come along, to hand the kids over to the mail driver. They couldn't feed them, you see.'

That was the reason O'Donoghue had placed his son and eldest daughter with the missionaries in 1927, and, faced with the same circumstances in 1934, why he did the same with Lowitja and her two older sisters. Only one child, the youngest, remained with the family. Fuller described Tom O'Donoghue as 'a good Catholic' who would not let his children starve to death. At the time there was no Australian social security system and churches and charities were the only sources of welfare. Moreover, there is other independent historical evidence from the same period that supports the plausibility of Rintoul's case. In her evidence to the Moseley Royal Commission in Western Australia in 1934, the Anglican lay missionary Mary Bennett described a similar response by other central desert Aborigines to the prolonged drought of the time. Aboriginal women who could not find enough food in the bush brought their children in to the Mount Margaret United Aborigines Mission on the western side of the Great Victoria Desert. Bennett said they left their children there but came back frequently to see them.[101]

When Rintoul and Lowitja went back to Granite Downs, the old people who remembered her family said his homestead was built on 'rubbish country', good for nothing. She asked some of her kin why she was taken away. 'Things were rough before,' said Peter Mungkari. 'They say that's *walypala* kid [whitefella kid], take that away.' In

[100] Josephine Flood, *The Original Australians: Story of the Aboriginal People*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2006, pp 227–8. Flood fully acknowledged Rintoul's article as her source.

[101] Mary Bennett, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 19 March 1934, transcript p 216

other words, the children acceptable to the missions were the half-castes like Lowitja.

Tom O'Donoghue was far from the only local in the same predicament. In the 1920s, the famed bushman, and later author and clothing manufacturer, R. M. Williams, was a camel driver in the region. He knew both the O'Donoghue brothers. Interviewed by Rintoul, Williams said that he himself was involved at the time in the removal of up to 25 children, including several from Granite Downs. He took them by mail coach to the Oodnadatta mission transit house. One of them was Mick O'Donoghue's part-Aboriginal son who was suffering from polio. Williams said he was convinced he did the right thing. Of one woman whose children he took, he said: 'The mother had nothing to say. She was in a dilemma, too, because she probably knew that she couldn't go back to the bush.'

When Rintoul and Lowitja visited the Colebrook Home, she said the records gave her birthday as 1 August, the same birth date given to horses — another silence in the records, Rintoul wrote, that brought her to tears. 'I didn't matter,' she said. 'Nobody cared. It just reinforces everything that I thought as a child, that I wasn't important.' In her own earlier writings, she looked back on Colebrook with bitterness. In an article in 2000, she recalled:

> My most lasting memory of Colebrook is that it was a time of rigid rule-bound discipline, joyless religious observance, lack of privacy and a stultifying denial of autonomy. When I left at the age of 16 I felt I didn't know how to make a personal decision.[102]

Yet other children had a different experience. One of the few institutions to emerge favourably from the scrutiny of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's inquiry into the Stolen Generations was Colebrook. The inquiry's report called it an 'enlightened institution' for its practice of ensuring adults were attached to individual children as their primary carers. One woman who was there in the 1930s recalled:

> The two Sisters could not give you the love that a mother could give you but the older one of mine was Emily, that did my hair, she was more than your sister, she was your mother/auntie. The older ones sort of took the younger ones under their care. So you got your love in a different way. Matron couldn't give everybody hugs and love and kisses, but that minder was more like my mother.[103]

Another woman who spent eight years at Colebrook when O'Donoghue was there in the 1930s told the inquiry:

[102] O'Donohue, 'A Journey of Healing or a Road to Nowhere?', p 290
[103] *Bringing Them Home*, p 169

> We were all happy together, us kids. We had two very wonderful old ladies that looked after us. It wasn't like an institution really. It was just a big happy family. I can say that about that home — United Aborigines Mission home that was at Quorn. Y'know they gave us good teaching, they encouraged us to be no different to anybody else. We went to the school, public school. There was no difference between white or black.[104]

Moreover, this was once the kind of opinion held by O'Donoghue herself. In March 1977, before the term 'Stolen Generations' was coined, she was interviewed about her life, career and experience at Colebrook. In a sympathetic article in the *Adelaide Advertiser*, journalist Stewart Cockburn reported she told him 'she had a happy childhood there with 50 other part-Aboriginal boys and girls'.

> 'Two single women ran the place', she told me. 'They were dedicated to their job, and we all had the dependable care and affection of the same foster mothers until we were well into adolescence. Of course, the younger children also had the affectionate support of the older ones, as in any good Aboriginal community.'[105]

The turnabout in O'Donoghue's recollections deserves comment. It would be easy to accuse her of telling politically expedient falsehoods. However, it is more useful to regard such an about-face as something built into almost everyone's recollections of the distant past. When individuals tell stories about their lives, they shape the narrative to lead logically to the present. They leave out information they perceive to be irrelevant to, or in conflict with, the coherence of the narrative. What people recall is usually influenced by the dictates of the present time. As one of the theorists of the oral history movement, Anna Green, has put it: 'A present–past relationship is at the core of a life history.' Green says this is particularly the case in the life histories of politicians, celebrities and other public figures who need to create a public persona.[106] Federal Court Judge Maurice O'Loughlin made a similar point about the recollections of Aboriginal witnesses in the failed test case of the Stolen Generations *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*:

[104] *Bringing Them Home*, p 169

[105] This is taken from a version of Cockburn's article quoted by P. P. McGuinness in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 February 2001 and in *Quadrant*, June 2000, p 34. Another version of the article is Stewart Cockburn, 'Elder of our Nation', in *Notable Lives: Profiles of 21 South Australians*, Ferguson Publications, Adelaide, 1997

[106] Anna Green, ' "Unpacking" the Stories', in Anna Green and Megan Hutching, eds., *Remembering: Writing Oral History*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2004, p 15

> I do not think that the evidence of either Mrs Cubillo or Mr Gunner was deliberately untruthful but I am concerned about their ability to recall, accurately, events that occurred so many years ago when they were small children. I am also concerned that they have unconsciously engaged in exercises of reconstruction, based, not on what they knew at the time, but on what they have convinced themselves must have happened or what others may have told them.[107]

Having said this, it is worth observing that O'Donoghue's memory of Colebrook extended to not just how much she was loved or unloved but to the facts about what actually happened there. She claimed she was deliberately prevented from contacting her mother. Stewart Cockburn wrote:

> 'You know,' she told me, 'my mother and I were never allowed to communicate, or even exchange photographs of each other. They just wanted to wipe her out of my life and me out of hers. Only when I had grown up was I able to discover her identity and regularly visit her.'[108]

However, at other times, both she and other Colebrook children have denied this happened to all those living there. In the interview he recorded with O'Donoghue in February 2001, Andrew Bolt quoted her saying: 'There were (Aboriginal) children there who were supported by their fathers and were visited by them.' Bolt also cited two former Colebrook girls who grew up with O'Donoghue, Nancy Barnes and Faith Thomas, and who confirmed that contacts with parents were not barred.[109]

From all this, one clear point emerges that goes to the heart of the Stolen Generations debate. Once the academic thesis that Aboriginal children had been deliberately stolen by white officials had penetrated the consciousness of those affected, it strongly influenced their memories. It encouraged them to recall feelings and even events in a different way.

This does not mean they were suffering a kind of collective hallucination, but it does mean that their memory selectively called up and placed emphasis upon those feelings and events that fitted the overarching thesis. There should be nothing surprising about this. It is the most common finding of academic historians who have engaged in oral history and other memory-based research projects. Historian Bain Attwood has made a similar case to Anna Green. He concedes that memory is an active process whereby meanings and interpretations

[107] O'Loughlin J, Federal Court of Australia, Northern Territory District Registry, *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, (2000) 174 ALR 97–584, 11 August 2000, para 125

[108] Cockburn, 'Elder of our Nation', p 122

[109] Bolt, 'I Wasn't Stolen', p 4

are produced in the present: 'We should be aware that people invariably construct and reconstruct memories.' He admits that the present determines what people recall of their past: 'From the vantage point of the present the informant discovers an order or a pattern in his or her past it did not have at that time.'[110] Hence, once they were subject to such a powerful, overarching explanation as the Stolen Generations thesis, it is not surprising that the memories of Aboriginal adults of their childhood shifted emphasis.

O'Donoghue was one of those who took the thesis to heart. She became convinced that Aboriginal people had suffered terribly as children were removed from their parents as part of a nationwide plot by white officials to eliminate Aboriginality. Indeed, she repeated this view succinctly in her dispute with Andrew Bolt. In her press release in February 2001 in response to Bolt's front page story she wrote:

> I know that my Aboriginal mother would have had no legal recourse, nor any moral support, in resisting our removal. I also know that her grief was unbearable. Our removal would have been seen as consistent with the policies of the time which effectively sought to *erase or assimilate* the Aboriginal population. [emphasis added]

This is one reason the terminology adopted has been so important to this debate. As I noted above, one of the responses to Bolt's revelation was an editorial in *The Australian* headed 'Sad Semantics Betray the Stolen Children'. It argued the debate about reconciliation was once again reduced to semantics. This was a common theme of many in the media who recoiled from Bolt's findings. Several writers agreed with O'Donoghue that it mattered little whether we described her separation as 'stolen' or 'removed' because she and her mother suffered equally either way. The Labor Opposition's Aboriginal affairs spokesman Bob McMullan took up the theme. He agreed the difference between stolen and removed was 'semantic', and accused Prime Minister Howard of scoring cheap political points: 'The Prime Minister's lost the plot if he thinks the issue is whether one person was removed rather than stolen.'[111]

But, of course, this semantic difference matters enormously. If we are told a child was removed from its parents, most of us will sympathize with the child's plight but not form any moral judgement about the removal itself. But if we are told a child was stolen from its parents, the statement automatically makes a moral assessment of the

[110] Bain Attwood, 'Oral Narratives, Autobiography and History', in Bain Attwood, Winifred Burrage, Alan Burrage and Elsie Stokie, *A Life Together, A Life Apart: A History of Relations Between Europeans and Aborigines*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1994, pp 202–3

[111] *Weekend Australian*, 24–25 February 2001, p 1

action and the intentions of whoever did it. That is why Peter Read's title for his 1981 pamphlet *The Stolen Generations* was so potent. If he had ignored his wife's advice and stuck with his first choice, *The Lost Generations*, the issue would never have had the impact it has. There would have been no implicit accusation of wrongful behaviour and no inherent attribution of malevolent intent. Hence, this apparently semantic issue is drenched in both morality and politics.

Andrew Bolt knew this when he recorded his interview and wrote his story. O'Donoghue realized it the minute she confessed she wasn't stolen. She saw that by accepting a change in the terminology, she had not only thrown open to doubt the long-accepted account of her own background but had also opened a window to a different moral and political perspective on the whole issue.

THE 'STOLEN YOUTH' OF CHARLES PERKINS

> All my youth, my best years, were taken from me and I regret it bitterly. The hunger and the poverty of it all. Always hungry. Sometimes when I have a meal now I eat too much ... It's that stolen youth. Stolen youth. And that's the saddest thing of all which I'm so bitterly resentful about. I know lots of people say, 'I worked hard all me life and I never even knew youth, I just worked in a factory' or somebody says, 'Life was difficult for me too, always lived in Marrickville, it was Struggletown'. Well, I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about my life, and my life as I see it was taken from me. And it shouldn't have been.
>
> — Charles Perkins, interview with Peter Read, 1989[112]

From the early 1960s until his death in 2000, Charles Perkins was by far the best known person of Aboriginal descent in Australia. He was a long-time political activist who had drawn attention to his cause by becoming in 1965 the first male Aborigine to gain a university degree, by his appointment to a prominent public service position under the Whitlam Labor government in 1973, and his rise to become the head of the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs in the 1980s. Along the way, he was the centre of attention in a range of events that captured national media attention. In February 1965 he was the central figure of the student Freedom Ride to north-western New South Wales. In August 1965, he thwarted the White Australia policy by 'kidnapping' from Sydney Airport an Indian girl (with covert approval of her family) as she was about to be deported to Fiji. In 1975 he rescued white hostages held by an Aboriginal gunman in the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in Canberra. In 1988 his career imploded when he was dismissed by the government after granting public funds to an Aboriginal club he chaired so it could buy

[112] Peter Read, *Charles Perkins: A Biography*, Viking, Melbourne, 1990, p 34

poker machines.[113] In 2000 he threatened to organize internationally embarrassing demonstrations against the Olympic Games in Sydney.

In his 1975 autobiography, *A Bastard Like Me*, Perkins declared himself a child forcibly removed and institutionalized by white authorities. Long before Peter Read defined the term 'stolen generations', Perkins had described the damaging long-term unhappiness that removal had given him. In 1973, he told a Senate select committee that, although he was made tougher by his removal from his mother in Alice Springs, 'you lose things along the way'.

> You lose the love of your family and home which some people think are important. I do ... You develop a set of values that you are not entirely happy with when you finally achieve some sort of success. And is it success in consideration of what you would have done in another world? I would hate anybody to have to live the life I have had to live.[114]

In his autobiography, Perkins gave a long and disturbing account of the brutal policies in place during his childhood in the Alice Springs region in the 1930s and 1940s. Authorities forcibly seized children from their parents and, as a result, scarred them for life. *A Bastard Like Me* gave readers the distinct impression that Perkins was describing his own fate:

> Welfare officers took the child away by force from the tribal mother and put the child in Welfare or Church homes, in dormitories and on reserves. That is where I was brought up, in a dormitory. There was a dormitory for all the young blokes. These were the dormitories where they brought children up. This was to keep them away from the tribal people. It was cruel and unnatural. Bobby Randall, Bill Ryan and thousands of others throughout Australia are living examples of this practice. We always tried to cling together anyhow, in some way or another, despite these things. If we were caught together, then the police would intervene and beat us up ...
>
> If tribal people were living around the towns, on cattle stations or near settled places, permanently resident there, the police would just whip them off, no trouble. Children were the main victims of this division of families. The troopers would ride up and say, 'All right, get the half-caste kids!' Like rounding up the lambs from the rest of the sheep, they would separate them, put them in a truck and off they would go. These kids were brought up in institutions across the Territory. That is why a lot of us have hang-ups. How else could it be? You miss the love of a mother and all the other things that go with it, the family circle. As a young kid,

[113] Read, *Charles Perkins*, pp 98–118, 150–3, 168–70, 253–5, 291–8

[114] Senate Select Committee on Social Environment, hearings, 16 June 1973, p 1199, cited by Read, *Charles Perkins*, p 195

> four or five years old, dumped with a lot of strangers, you can be emotionally scarred for life.[115]

Perkins said his experiences of white institutions in his childhood, coupled with his removal from his tribal cultural heritage in Central Australia, troubled him all his life. 'All through my life I have been plagued by doubt: "Something's wrong, what is it." I suppose everybody has this but with me it was almost an obsession.'[116] He had no doubts, however, about who was to blame.

> Everything that has gone wrong is mainly due to government and missionary stupidity and to white society generally. The Aborigines let it happen in one way. They are passive, humble and considerate. They are not a militaristic people. Their attitude is, 'There's plenty of room — come in and live with us'.
>
> But the white people took over by force. The Aborigines did not oppose them. They presumed the whites would act according to their values and ethics. This did not eventuate. The law in Australia is one of force and this is the way it has been in the Territory, and is now. Physical violence and the power of money are the instruments of Western society and their full force was brought to bear on the Aborigines in Australia.[117]

The unhappiness Perkins attributed to his removal provided an obviously influential model for the thesis on stolen children that Peter Read was to announce six years later. Indeed, so taken was he by the story, Read decided in the 1980s to write a biography of Perkins. His research included a wide range of interviews with Perkins himself, his mother, his siblings and former school friends. However, when he put the work together he produced a noticeably different version of Perkins's childhood than the one in the autobiography. Diplomatically, Read did not draw a comparison between his account and Perkins's earlier version, but anyone who reads both will find a serious discrepancy. For Charles Perkins was never forcibly removed from his family at all.

He was one of ten children born to Hetti Perkins, a half-caste woman from Alice Springs who had a series of four de facto husbands, three of them white men. Charles was born some time in 1936. His father was Martin Connelly, a half-caste man from Mount Isa, whose relationship with Charles's mother lasted throughout 1935 and 1936. After fathering a second son to Hetti, Connelly abandoned her and the boys. Since 1928, Hetti had been employed at the Bungalow, a government-run welfare home for half-caste children from the Alice Springs district. When Charles was born, the Bungalow was

[115] Charles Perkins, *A Bastard Like Me*, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1975, pp 14–15
[116] Perkins, *A Bastard Like Me*, pp 23-4
[117] Perkins, *A Bastard Like Me*, p 26

located in the former overland telegraph office of the Postmaster-General's Department, which still survives today as a heritage site and tourist attraction. His mother's job was called 'chief dormitory girl' but she was the senior Aboriginal staff member in rank and payment, responsible for both the infants' dormitory and all food preparation. According to Read's biography, when Charles was young he hardly left her side.

> He was close to his mother, the closest he believed, of all her children ...In the early years she carried him in a bundle to the kitchen while she got on with the cooking. By 1940 Charles followed her like a shadow, 'like a little dog' wrapped up on a sack near the stove.[118]

In 1942, when Alice Springs came under control of the Australian Army as part of World War II defences, the Bungalow was closed as a children's home and became a military headquarters. Hetti and her youngest children moved first into a room at the back of a shop, then to a nearby welfare housing village called Rainbow Town, while she was employed as cook in an Alice Springs restaurant. In 1944, a local Anglican priest, Father Percy Smith, set up a school for both black and white boys. 'Hetti trusted Father Smith, who regularly visited Rainbow Town,' wrote Read, 'and when he offered to educate Perkins at St Mary's church across the paddocks she willingly accepted.' The school was residential but Charles could hardly be described as a boy who had been 'removed' to it. Read wrote: 'For a few months the 8-year-old Perkins lived apart from his mother, coming home only for weekends, though his new residence was only 200 metres away.'[119]

Percy Smith was an Anglican priest of the Brotherhood of St Paul. In 1933, he arrived in Alice Springs where he and his wife Isabel built relationships with the families of half-caste Aborigines who were treated as outcasts by the local full-blood population. He thought that half-caste children were entitled to and capable of becoming normal Australian citizens.

At the time, Alice Springs did not have a high school, and did not get one until 1953. White children who wanted a secondary education generally went to Adelaide and stayed at a boarding school or hostel. Smith wanted something similar so the boys at his school could go on to further their education. He and his wife got church support to take over a converted eight-bed former hospital in the middle-class Adelaide suburb of Kensington Park. They were to take six Aboriginal boys who would live with them while they attended a local state school. 'Their parents would not only have to agree,'

[118] Read, *Charles Perkins*, pp 15–16
[119] Read, *Charles Perkins*, p 20

wrote Read, 'but they would be expected to help support the boys' education.'[120] When the first three boys left on the train from Alice Springs with Percy and Isabel Smith in January 1945, no one in their families thought they were being forcibly removed or stolen. It was a great occasion:

> There was a large crowd to see them off at the station and more of the boys' relatives gathered along the track for a kilometre or two to wave goodbye. There was more excitement than tears. To Perkins it seemed like a holiday rather than a new life; so great was his excitement that he cannot remember whether it was day or night.[121]

Father Smith named their new Adelaide home St Francis House. In the 1940s, most of its eventual intake of 23 boys came from Alice Springs. A few had originally been evacuated from the Northern Territory during World War II and had spent a period at the Mulgoa Anglican mission on the western outskirts of Sydney. The little experiment was far from trouble-free. The school work at the first high school the boys attended was beyond their then ability and they had to transfer to a technical school. Some of the boys found the religious regime of chapel twice a day onerous. Nonetheless, Read acknowledged the boys responded very well to their participation in this 'remarkable and innovate act of faith'. They were treated as individuals who the Smiths 'treasured as if they were their own sons'.

> Probably as much love was bestowed upon the boys by the Smiths as on any children in the long history of Aboriginal institutions. There was no paid staff. Percy and Isabel did all the work until Mrs Smith's cousin, known as Aunt Jingle, came to help. Money was tight even after the Commonwealth government provided a subsidy. On Saturdays Smith sometimes took the boys to football matches, or at night to the pictures. Out would come the pocket-money tin, kept replenished by parents in Alice Springs.[122]

As noted above, Perkins complained in *A Bastard Like Me* that his experience at St Francis had turned him into 'an institutional type of bloke', as if he had been rendered a submissive, deprived automaton. The evidence Read gleaned from those who knew him at the time told another story.

> Perkins was loved as much as the others. The Smiths seemed to have understood him well, and he responded to their warmth. He was lively and affectionate, sang in the choir, and did not answer back as Malcolm Cooper sometimes did. But he was more sensitive to slight than the oth-

[120] Read, *Charles Perkins*, p 21
[121] Read, *Charles Perkins*, p 24
[122] Read, *Charles Perkins*, p 25

ers. He would fight on and on with other boys, sometimes past the point of good sense.[123]

After 1948, when the Smiths returned to their parish at Alice Springs, their successors at St Francis installed a more institutionalized and authoritarian regime. Nonetheless, Perkins was anything but submissive. In 1952, aged sixteen, and after a succession of arguments with the supervisor, he was ordered to leave. At the time, he had finished school and St Francis organized an apprenticeship for him at British Tube Mills, Adelaide. He moved into a private boarding house (the source of the complaint at the start of this section that he was always hungry — no after-meal snacks were provided) and eventually emerged as a qualified fitter and turner.[124]

In the long history of welfare homes for Aboriginal children in Australia, St Francis House in the 1940s was probably the most successful. Perkins was only the best known of its high achievers. One of his classmates, John Moriarty, became a director of Aboriginal Affairs in South Australia. Another, Gordon Briscoe, became an academic historian at the Australian National University. Others from the same small group included an industrial foreman, a police sergeant and a cultural entrepreneur.[125] In 1996 John Moriarty recorded an interview for the National Library's oral history project. As well as a public servant, Moriarty had been sportsman, businessman, designer and author of the memoir *Saltwater Fella* (2000).[126] He could count three of their little group who had university degrees (one a PhD), eight who became qualified skilled tradesmen, and eight who represented their state in various sports. In the 1950s, Wally McArthur and Jim Foster had gone to England to play rugby and Gordon Briscoe, Charles Perkins and Moriarty had gone to England to play soccer. Moriarty represented South Australia in the sport and was chosen for the Australian team.[127]

Perkins was not grateful for the training he was given in his skilled trade. He found the work 'boring and futile'. His workmates were 'nice people but it was agony for five years'.[128] However, he had an alternative attraction. He had been playing soccer since he was fourteen and the sport quickly came to dominate his non-working life.

[123] Read, *Charles Perkins*, p 26
[124] Read, *Charles Perkins*, pp 30–1
[125] Read, *Charles Perkins*, p 35
[126] Moriarty's design company Balarinji was responsible for the Aboriginal art on the Qantas Wunala (Kangaroo) Dreaming 747 aircraft.
[127] Interview with John Moriarty conducted by Sue Taffe, 25-26 November 1996, National Library of Australia, Collaborating for Indigenous Rights: http://indigenousrights.net.au/person.asp?pID=976
[128] Read, *Charles Perkins*, p 40

He was a gifted forward and centre-half. In 1955, when his team International United were South Australian competition premiers, he was named one of the three best players.[129]

In 1957, after a visiting talent scout from the Liverpool club Everton offered to pay half his fare to England to try out for the club, Perkins accepted. He arrived at Liverpool midway through the 1957 season and, although he did not make the first division squad, his performance in lower divisions led Everton to offer him a contract as a part-time professional player. He opted instead to play for one of England's top amateur teams, Bishop Auckland. Halfway through the 1958 season, the manager of Manchester United offered him a contract to play first division. However, he turned it down and instead accepted an offer from Croatia soccer club in Adelaide to pay his return fare home and become a professional player for them. He returned to Adelaide in June 1959 after an absence of two years.[130] By 1961 he had signed up with the Sydney Greek Pan-Hellenic (later Sydney Olympic) team. He and his new bride, Eileen Munchenberg, a descendant of one of South Australia's German Lutheran families, moved to Sydney. He soon became captain-coach of the ostensibly Greek team.

In Sydney, Perkins became a familiar member of the small group of Aboriginal political activists and their white supporters. One of the latter, the clergyman Ted Noffs, arranged for Perkins to do a course in remedial English at the Metropolitan Business College and, from there, to start a Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of Sydney. The following year, the media exposure attracted by the Freedom Ride, organized by students at that university, made Perkins a national figure. When the Whitlam government was elected in 1972, partly on a platform of Aboriginal reform, Perkin's trajectory into the world of politics was fixed.

There are a great many young Australians of all ethnicities who would covet a career start of this kind — skilled tradesman, sporting star, media identity, political figure, all by his mid-thirties. Indeed, there are many who would admire Perkins for his soccer career alone. They would revere anyone offered the chance to play for such hallowed clubs as Everton and Manchester United — and would be simply incredulous that he could turn down both. While Australia has always been a country where boys from nowhere could do very well for themselves (as the life stories of most of our prime ministers testify), Perkins's career was almost unprecedented in the social mobility he attained in such a short time. Nonetheless, when Perkins himself

[129] Read, *Charles Perkins*, pp 42–4
[130] Read, *Charles Perkins*, pp 50–2

deliberated on the hand life dealt him he did not see it that way. In the interviews he gave in 1988–89 for Peter Read's biography, his bitterness went deep. Read recorded:

> Perkins, who in 1952 was grateful for his 'rescue' from the slums of Alice Springs, is now much less so. To him the story of St Francis House is one of opportunities lost, not won. The apprenticeship which was arranged for him he sees merely as a futile limitation on what he might have achieved if the expectation had been that boys could succeed at anything they tried ... 'I forgive but I don't forget ... I owe nothing to the whites in Australia. Nothing.'[131]

Read claims that it was only as he grew older that Perkins realized the significance of his cultural loss, and its consequences for all Aboriginal children removed from their parents, no matter what the circumstances.

> Did the years away rob him and the other boys of their culture? Is the part-Aboriginal heritage lost in childhood fully recoverable? It is worth recovering? Should all the separated children, whether their parents assented or not, be counted amongst 'the stolen generations?[132]

Read's answer to his own rhetorical questions was an unequivocal 'yes'. Despite his mother's open agreement to his white education, Perkins's loss of his Aboriginal surroundings thereby rendered him and anyone like him, a 'stolen' child. In the Foreword to his biography, Read wrote:

> To some extent Perkins is the product of the racist policies in force during his youth. In 1945, at the age of 9, he was removed from his mother's care at Alice Springs to a family group home in Adelaide. He did not return for a longer period than six weeks until he was stood down from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in 1975. No Aborigine, I hope, will ever endure the fractured childhood which so many members of his generation suffered.[133]

In other words, for Read, any part-Aboriginal child who grows up among whites was, by definition, 'stolen' as the result of 'racist policies'. Moreover, those who imagine Perkins was well compensated by his influential career and political accomplishments are mistaken, Read says, because they are simply seeing things through the values of Western culture. 'Perkins believes, as did Smith, that he would not have achieved so much had he remained at Alice Springs,' Read wrote. 'He is undoubtedly correct — in European terms.'[134]

[131] Read, *Charles Perkins*, pp 35–6
[132] Read, *Charles Perkins*, p 37
[133] Read, *Charles Perkins*, p xiii
[134] Read, *Charles Perkins*, pp 38–9

Although the St Francis boys were thankful for having avoided becoming Todd River drunks or illiterate stockmen, Read argued Perkins would still have been better off had he remained with his mother in Alice Springs. By the 1980s, his drive and ambition would have allowed him to take advantage of all the reforms then won by Aboriginal people.

> Perkins, remaining, would clearly have been the most powerful indigenous personality in a country of strong people. He would have been chairman of the Central Land Council, Imparja Television, the Central Australian Aboriginal Land Congress or Tangentyere Town Council. He could have been a traditional healer, a fully initiated elder, or a kadaitcha of great mystical power.[135]

This is hardly credible. There was little chance a boy like Perkins would have ever become a leader of any Central Australian Aboriginal organization in a community where the majority were still of full-blood descent, where land title and 'big man' status were decided by rules of kinship, and where full-bloods saw town half-castes like him as inferior breeds. Indeed, in June 1968, when Perkins started a public debate about how Australia needed a radical Black Power movement like that of the United States, full-blood Aborigines in the Northern Territory put him in his place. Clancy Roberts, a full-blood man from Roper River, responded:

> We don't want Black Power and we don't want people advocating it for us — especially people who are not aboriginals.

David Daniels, a full-blood member of the Nunggubuyu people, said of Perkins:

> He is not a full-blood Aboriginal. He can't know how full-blood aboriginals think and feel — but I can tell him we don't want Black Power. [136]

Perkins's status within traditional Aboriginal society had been decided long before he was born. His mother, the daughter of an Aboriginal woman and a white man, had gone past the point of no return when, as a teenager, she walked away from Aboriginal community life and went to live with white men. The notion that Perkins could have been a traditional healer or man of mystical power is romantic fantasy.

Moreover, Perkins himself freely chose to make his own life among white people. While at school in Adelaide, he had returned home for holidays every year, spending December and January at

[135] Read, *Charles Perkins*, p 39

[136] 'We Don't Want Gun Law — Natives', *Herald*, Melbourne, 26 June 1968, p 7

Alice Springs. Once he left St Francis, he could have gone home permanently had he strongly felt the need. Instead, he preferred the life he made in Adelaide and Sydney. His laments about his 'stolen youth' cannot be taken seriously. A very large number of Aboriginal people have moved further away, for much longer periods to get an education, to pursue a career, to play sport, or simply to see the world, and have been more than happy to do so.

The truth is that Charles Perkins was one of the most privileged Australians of his generation. Few white children born in the Depression decade of the 1930s had his opportunities.

Only a minority of boys of that era had the chance of entry to a skilled trade. Before the 1950s, many trades were closed shops, with the few apprenticeships available going largely to family members or the well-connected. If a young man wanted to go to England from Australia in 1953 he needed either to have wealthy parents or to save for a long time to pay for the sea voyage. For a part-Aboriginal youth to play professional football in the 1950s there had to be an institutional culture that assessed him only on ability, not race. All Australian football codes were of this kind. To join the small elite who went to the Australian universities in the early 1960s,[137] you normally had to matriculate by passing five subjects, including maths, a science and/or a foreign language, in the New South Wales Leaving Certificate examination, or its interstate equivalents. Thanks to the academic connections of the Reverend Ted Noffs, Perkins was spared that high educational hurdle. To live away from home and be a full-time student in that era of tuition fees, you needed a Commonwealth or Teacher's Scholarship, or a financial benefactor. Scholarships depended on your results in the matriculation examination, which Perkins did not take. Instead, his white wife Eileen worked to support him while he undertook his course full-time and practised student politics. For most of his adult life, Perkins pursued the Aboriginal cause through public service jobs funded by Australian taxpayers. The social and cultural organizations he established were funded by government grants and white donations. In short, despite what he said publicly, Perkins owed his entire career to white people.

Although he initially directed his words at white audiences, in the long run they had a greater impact among Aboriginal communities. This was especially true of those in cities and big country towns disconnected by several generations from traditional society, who looked to him as the man who defined their concerns and interests. By

[137] In 1963, the year after Perkins started his degree, there were 15,700 new enrolments in bachelors' degrees in Australian universities, compared to the 215,700 in 2007.

blaming whites for all the problems faced by Aborigines he scored some debating points, he put their cause onto the political map and, in the early years, got some quick results. Ultimately, however, the culture of permanent grievance, for which he provided one of the earliest and most public models, did much more harm than good. It told Aborigines they were not responsible for their behaviour. None of the domestic violence, broken families, alcoholism, abandoned children or criminal actions that devastated Aboriginal communities was their own fault. Instead, Aborigines came to believe the causes lay in white society, by a white racism that kept them down, by the historical disruption of traditional society, and by white removal of their children.

Thanks to his natural intelligence and ability, coupled with the considerable efforts of his closest supporters, Perkins made a very successful career for himself within the white society he pilloried. But the public complaints that generated his own success told others that his was the wrong way to go. His critique defined black entry to white society as a sell-out. Education and the work ethic were white values, not blackfella ways. In effect, instead of creating a means for others to pursue the life he had enjoyed himself, he kicked away the ladder.

This left a great void in the program for Aboriginal political reform and was one of the reasons why integration, the original slogan under which the Freedom Ride was launched in 1965, later became a dated concept and a dirty word. In its place, the void was filled by the romantic alternative advocated on the far left of the political spectrum: black power, cultural and political separatism, land rights, remote communities, customary law, education in tribal languages, welfare instead of work, and such vocations as 'kadaitchas of great mystical power' — in short, a package in direct contradiction to everything that gave Perkins the fortunate life he lived.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Breeding out the colour

ADDRESSING an Australian conference in 1997, the former High Court judge and co-author of the *Bringing Them Home* report on the Stolen Generations, Sir Ronald Wilson, quoted a statement he said had been made 60 years earlier at the 1937 conference of national and state Aboriginal affairs ministers:

> This conference believes that the destiny of the natives of Aboriginal origin, but not of the full blood, lies in their ultimate absorption by the people of the Commonwealth and it therefore recommends that all efforts be directed to that end. Nobody who knows about these groups could deny that their members are socially and culturally deprived. We must improve their lot so that they can take their place economically and socially in the general community. Once this is done, the breakup of such groups will be rapid.[1]

'That, ladies and gentlemen, is genocide,' Wilson told his audience, 'and as an Australian and a non-Indigenous Australian I apologize with all my heart to the Aboriginal people that my people, whether or not with the best will in the world, promoted that process.'

It is true that the 1937 conference advocated the absorption of some Aborigines, though not others, into the general Australian population. The first sentence quoted here by Wilson comes from one of

[1] Ronald Wilson, 'Human Rights and Indigenous Australians', address to the Australian Reconciliation Convention, 1997, www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/IndigLRes/car/1997/4/wilson.html. The original text of the conference is published in *Aboriginal Welfare: Initial Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities Held at Canberra, 21st to 23rd April 1937*, Government Printer, Canberra, 1937

the resolutions it passed. The other three sentences, however, were *not* part of the resolution and were not actually spoken by anyone at the conference. At the time, and ever since, similar sentiments were certainly expressed about Aborigines being economically and social deprived and about the desirability of improving their economic and social position. No one at the conference, however, said: 'Once this is done, the breakup of such groups will be rapid.' That sentence, which implied that the intention behind amelioration was the breakup of Aboriginal society and culture, is Wilson's own embellishment of the text of the proceedings. As I demonstrate below, Wilson is far from the only one who has done this. He is one of many who have made that conference appear to say things and hold beliefs it never actually did.

The notion that the absorption or assimilation of some Aboriginal people into the European population is a form of genocide had gone around academic and leftist political circles long before Wilson's enquiry but gained enormous impetus from it. Afterwards, the full imprimatur of the report was deployed, in both formal and informal political settings, to make the charge stick. As one New South Wales government submission later wrote: the Stolen Generations report 'established that the forced removal of children and the policy of assimilation was an act of genocide contrary to the *Convention on Genocide* ratified by Australia in 1949'.[2] The historian Henry Reynolds made a similar case and drawn its political implications. In the last two chapters of his book *An Indelible Stain?* he argued the only way the Australian nation can avoid the charge of genocide under United Nations conventions is to give up assimilation and ensure the survival of the Aborigines as a distinct group of people. And the only way to accomplish that, he said, was for Australia to recognize customary law, Aboriginal self-government, regional agreements (treaties), and a constitutional definition of indigenous rights.[3] In other words, Reynolds used the charge of genocide as a tactic to publicly intimidate this country into accepting the most radical version of the political agenda for Aboriginal segregation.

AUSTRALIAN HISTORY'S MOST TERRIBLE MOMENT

Much of the weight of the accusation that, in Australia, assimilation equaled genocide was borne by the opinions expressed at the 1937 Canberra conference, the first meeting of Commonwealth and State

[2] Department of Aboriginal Affairs (NSW), *Submission to the Review of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*, p 3

[3] Henry Reynolds, *An Indelible Stain?: The question of Genocide in Australia's History*, Viking, Melbourne, 2001, pp 155–79

departments of Aboriginal affairs ever held. Almost all the historians who interpret it this way use the speeches and resolutions made by the public servants at this meeting as their evidence for policies that purportedly continued for decades afterwards. According to political commentator Robert Manne, the conference was probably the most horrific event in recent Australian history:

> If there exists a more terrible moment in the history of the twentieth-century Australian state than the Canberra conference of April 1937, I for one do not know where it is to be discovered.[4]

In support, the philosopher Raimond Gaita observed a sinister conjunction of sentiment:

> the reason the report of the 1937 conference of the key administrators of the absorption program is such chilling reading is because page after page expresses precisely this conjunction of racist disdain and sincere professions of concern for the welfare of the Aborigines. Without a trace of irony, the report is called *Aboriginal Welfare*.[5]

The conclusion that this amounted to genocide is now entrenched within the international academic literature on the subject

> It is impossible to conclude otherwise than that Australia in the 1930s was possessed of an administrative culture that in reality practised genocide.
>
> — Paul Bartrop, *Journal of Genocide Research*, 2001[6]

According to those who make this case, the leading figures at the 1937 conference were advocates of eugenics, a notion fashionable among intellectuals in the early twentieth century that was taken up by Nazi Germany in the 1930s with the intention of improving the Aryan racial stock by controlled breeding.[7] In Australia, said Robert Manne, the era was marked by 'cultural contempt and social alarm' at the increase in the numbers of people of mixed Aboriginal-European descent. Inspired by eugenics, state bureaucrats sought to control half-caste breeding by prohibiting them from marrying either full-blood

[4] Robert Manne, 'The Stolen Generations', *Quadrant*, January–February 1998, p 59

[5] Raimond Gaita, 'The Stolen Children', *Quadrant*, letters, January–February 1998, p 3

[6] Paul Bartrop, 'The Holocaust, the Aborigines, and the Bureaucracy of Destruction: An Australian Dimension of Genocide', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 3, 1, 2001, p 83

[7] Tony Austin, 'Cecil Cook, Scientific Thought and Half-Castes', *Aboriginal History*, 14, 1, 1990; Henry Reynolds, *Nowhere People: How International Race Thinking Shaped Australia's Identity*, Viking, Melbourne, 2005, Chapter Three; Robert Manne, 'The Stolen Generations', pp 57–9; Paul Bartrop, 'The Holocaust, the Aborigines, and the Bureaucracy of Destruction'

Aborigines or other half-castes. If they were only permitted to marry Europeans or those lighter in colour than themselves, the process would eventually 'breed out the colour'.

Two of the most important Aboriginal administrators of the period, Cecil Cook of the Northern Territory and Auber Octavius Neville of Western Australia, were 'enthusiastic converts' to the eugenics cause, said Manne.[8] As evidence, he quoted the conference's resolution headed 'the destiny of the race'. It called for the total absorption into the white community of all non-full-blood natives. That resolution was the first sentence quoted above by Sir Ronald Wilson: 'This conference believes that the destiny of the natives of Aboriginal origin, but not of the full bloods, lies in their ultimate absorption by the people of the Commonwealth and it therefore recommends that all efforts be directed to that end.' For good measure, Manne told his readers that the delegate who moved this resolution, A. O. Neville, was 'the intellectually dominant figure in the Canberra discussions'. In one of his addresses to the conference, Neville asked the rhetorical question:

> Are we going to have a population of 1,000,000 blacks in the Commonwealth, or are we going to merge them into our white community and eventually forget that there were any Aborigines in Australia?[9]

Manne interpreted this statement as an expression of Neville's desire for an Australia ethnically cleansed of Aborigines. He claimed Neville believed this would occur because the full-blood Aborigines would die out and those half-castes remaining would be coerced into breeding only with whites. 'At that moment in Australian history,' Manne said of the 1937 conference, 'genocidal thought and administrative practice touched.'[10] The historian Russell McGregor of James Cook University has endorsed this interpretation:

> Indisputably, in my view, 'breeding out the colour' was policy, in that it was a systematic course of action endorsed and pursued by those charged with authority over Aboriginal affairs ... I find Robert Manne's arguments persuasive: genocidal intent was *sometimes* manifest in twentieth

[8] Manne, 'The Stolen Generations', pp 56–8

[9] Manne, 'The Stolen Generations', quotes this on p 59. In the conference transcript, *Aboriginal Welfare*, it is on p 11.

[10] Robert Manne, *In Denial: The Stolen Generations and the Right*, The Australian Quarterly Essay, 1, 2001, Schwartz Publishing, Melbourne, p 40. Manne has repeated the same charge several times: 'the architect of the removal policy was the chief protector of Aborigines, A. O. Neville, a man driven by a society cleansed of "half-castes".' See his 'The Colour of Prejudice', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 February 2002, also *The Age*, 1 December 1997

century Aboriginal policy, and that 'sometimes' includes, above all, the schemes of systematic biological absorption pursued by Western Australia and the Northern Territory in the 1930s.[11]

Before the emergence of the Stolen Generations thesis, an older generation of historians, including Charles Rowley and Paul Hasluck, had seen things differently. Between 1910 and 1940, they argued, Commonwealth policy had four main aims: first, to ensure that the remaining nomadic tribes had enough land to pursue their traditional life; second, to make Aboriginal reserves places of refuge from alcohol, opium and disease and centres for welfare handouts to the needy; third, to preserve the ethnic purity of the full-blood Aborigines by prohibiting sexual contact between full-blood women and white or part-Aboriginal men; and fourth, to educate the children of poor, detribalized part-Aborigines living on the fringes of white towns and cities so they could take up employment in the white community. Throughout this period, protectors in Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia had the right to approve or prohibit marriages between whites and those full-bloods confined to Aboriginal reserves. Hence, Rowley and Hasluck argued, government policy was certainly racially motivated, but with the apparently worthy aim of preserving the original Aboriginal race intact.[12]

After the Stolen Generations thesis rose to academic prominence, the protectors' authority to control marriage among half-castes (rather than full-bloods), especially in Western Australia and the Northern Territory, became the central issue for historians. Concerned about an increase in the number of half-castes, the protectors responded with, in McGregor's words, 'a systematic course of action' to eliminate Aboriginality by the biological absorption of the half-caste population. 'Breeding out the colour' soon emerged as the preferred academic idiom for attempts by the protectors to bring this about.

What does all this have to do with stolen children? In itself, the goal of 'breeding out the colour' did not necessarily involve removing children from their parents or from Aboriginal culture. As its words said, its aim was to control breeding. It was focused most on preventing people of half-caste or lesser descent from marrying or cohabiting with Aborigines of either of full descent or half-caste. In Neville's words, it was 'to prevent the return of those half-castes who

[11] Russell McGregor, '"Breed Out the Colour" or the Importance of Being White', *Australian Historical Studies*, 120, October 2002, pp 288, 300 (his emphasis)

[12] C. D. Rowley, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1970, pp 181, 230–2; Paul Hasluck, *Shades of Darkness: Aboriginal Affairs 1925-1965*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1988, pp 66-8

are nearly white to the black.'[13] In February 1933, Dr Cecil Cook, the Chief Protector of Aborigines in the Northern Territory, used the phrase when he wrote to the Territory Administrator about the advisability of introducing a common policy with Queensland and Western Australia on inter-racial marriage. In this context, he did not mention the removal of children. He wrote:

PERMISSION TO MARRY ABORIGINALS

> ... In the Territory the mating of aboriginals with any person other than an aboriginal is prohibited. The mating of coloured aliens with any female of part-aboriginal blood is also prohibited. Every endeavour is being made to breed out the colour by elevating female half-castes to white standard with a view to their absorption by mating into the white population. The adoption of a similar policy throughout the Commonwealth is, in my opinion, a matter of vital importance.[14]

While his superiors never took up his invitation to adopt such a policy throughout the Commonwealth, Cook himself continued his attempt to make the female half-castes within his orbit of authority marry white men. As this chapter records in greater detail below, his matchmaking was an abject failure — as it well deserved to be. It was a gross and impertinent invasion of human rights. In a liberal-democratic society the state has no business intervening in private lives to this extent, particularly when its actions are directed solely at one group of people.

For the discussion here, however, the important point is that the objective of 'breeding out the colour' was confined to the control of marriage. One of the ploys used by those who support the Stolen Generations thesis is to find expressions of support for 'breeding out the colour' that refer only to marriage, and to then hold this up as evidence of a policy to steal children, which is quite a different thing. But to presume from a government's control over marriage that it was also engaged in child removal is to make an unwarranted leap from one category to another. Whether policy makers ever had the latter goal and whether they enacted it in practice, are matters we should decide on the evidence of what they actually said and did about removing children.

Nonetheless, the objective of 'breeding out the colour' has become such an integral part of the Stolen Generations debate that it needs to be examined here in some detail. The phrase deserves particular investigation because it bears much of the weight of the accusation

[13] *Aboriginal Welfare*, p 11

[14] C. E. Cook to Administrator of the Northern Territory, 7 February 1933, National Archives of Australia, Commonwealth Records Series, Department of the Interior file A659/1; 1940/1/408

that child removal in Australia was part of a program of assimilation that equalled genocide. Although his parliamentary apology to the Stolen Generations in February 2008 did not mention the term 'genocide', Prime Minister Kevin Rudd had no doubt that the removal of children and the desire to eliminate the Aboriginal race were inextricably linked:

> Let the parliament reflect for a moment on the following facts: that, between 1910 and 1970, between 10 and 30 per cent of Indigenous children were forcibly taken from their mothers and fathers. That, as a result, up to 50,000 children were forcibly taken from their families. That this was the product of the deliberate, calculated policies of the state as reflected in the explicit powers given to them under statute. That this policy was taken to such extremes by some in administrative authority that the forced extractions of children of so-called 'mixed lineage' were seen as part of a broader policy of dealing with 'the problem of the Aboriginal population'. One of the most notorious examples of this approach was from the Northern Territory Protector of Natives, who stated, and I quote:
>
> > Generally by the fifth and invariably by the sixth generation, all native characteristics of the Australian aborigine are eradicated. The problem of our half-castes —
>
> to quote the protector —
>
> > will quickly be eliminated by the complete disappearance of the black race, and the swift submergence of their progeny in the white.[15]

A. O. NEVILLE AND THE NATIVE ADMINISTRATION ACT OF 1936

When he addressed the 1937 Canberra conference, A. O. Neville commended the principles of the Western Australian government's Native Administration Act of 1936. He claimed this Act had overcome a number of the difficulties he faced in his position as Chief Protector, especially through the greater precision of its definitions. In the south-west, where lived 5000 of the state's 29,000 Aboriginal population, very few had remained of full descent in the century since colonization. In the north and north-west, however, most of the rest were full-bloods living either on missions, government stations and pastoral stations, or around the larger regional towns of the North-

[15] Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples, House of Representatives, Canberra, 13 February 2008

West and Kimberley districts. A significant minority still inhabited the unsettled desert country, existing as traditional hunter-gatherers.[16]

As Chief Protector, Neville had long experienced legal difficulties in defining the boundaries of his responsibilities. Before 1936, the term 'half-caste' was loosely used by both politicians and public servants to mean people of part-Aboriginal descent, even if that part was only one-quarter or one-eighth.[17] The definition depended largely on whether people looked like Aborigines but also if they associated most of the time with other Aborigines. However, in the 1920s some magistrates had begun to exempt half-castes and others of part descent from the onerous provisions of the Aborigines Act.[18] For some years after, Neville lobbied his various Ministers to clarify his powers and, he hoped, give him authority over all people of part descent. The 1936 Act clarified the issue by abolishing previous legal categories and substituting the term 'native'. In doing so, however, it effectively narrowed its definitions. Explicitly or implicitly, it defined 'natives' as follows:[19]

- those who were of full descent,
- those of half descent,[20]

[16] Henry Doyle Moseley, *Report of the Royal Commissioner Appointed to Investigate, Report and Advise Upon Matters in Relation to the Condition and Treatment of Aborigines*, Government Printer, Perth, 1935, p 3

[17] Peter Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens: The Aboriginal Problem in Western Australia 1898–1954*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1973, p 29

[18] Biskup, *Not Slaves: Not Citizens*, pp 160-1

[19] Native Administration, *The Acts of the Parliament of Western Australia*, 6 August 1936 to 11 December 1936, clause 2 (a), 2 (b), pp 2–3. I am spelling these categories out in detail because some Western Australian historians have misinterpreted the reach of the Act. Peter Biskup, otherwise the best historian of Western Australian Aboriginal policy of this period, misinterpreted the 1936 Act by thinking it *broadened* the definition of a 'native' to embrace 'practically all persons with an admixture of Aboriginal blood'. In reality, it *excluded* practically all adults of quarter descent and less, even though many of them had previously been regarded as Aborigines because of their appearance. Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, p 171. Anna Haebich follows Biskup in her *For Their Own Good: Aborigines and Government in the South West of Western Australia 1900-1940*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1988, pp 348–51

[20] The inclusion of those of half descent was not spelt out in the definition but was implicit in 2 (b) 'any person of less than full blood', since genuine half-castes were the only people in this category not excluded by other subsections 2(b)(i), 2(b)(ii) and 2(b)(iii), which excluded quadroons and people of lighter caste. As Neville said to the 1937 Canberra conference: 'we refer to them as natives whether they be full-blooded or half-caste', *Aboriginal Welfare*, p 10

- those of one-quarter descent, or 'quadroons', but only if they were under 21 years old and associated mainly with natives, and
- others of part descent who applied to be classed as natives under the Act (a very small group, mainly part-Aboriginal spouses).

On the other hand, those who were *not* now defined as natives included:

- people of one-quarter descent over 21 years of age,
- quarter-caste children under 21 who did not associate with natives, and
- all people of lesser degrees of descent living outside Aboriginal camps or settlements.

In short, the term 'natives' now applied only to full-bloods, half-castes, their quarter-caste children under 21, and others who applied to be classed as natives.

By excluding most people of one-quarter descent and less, the Act reduced the proportion of the part-Aboriginal population that came under Neville's control but, at the same time, gave him greater authority over those who remained. The Act made the Chief Protector, or Commissioner of Native Affairs as he was renamed, the legal guardian of every 'native' child until they were 21 years old, an increase from the previous sixteen years of age. He could determine where natives lived and controlled the permit system that allowed them employment.[21]

Above all, the Commissioner now controlled the marriage and sex lives of natives. The Act itself made it unlawful for anyone who was not a native (in effect, a white person or a quarter-caste person over 21) to cohabit with or have sex with a native, unless they were married to them. The Commissioner was responsible for making complaints under this section. The Commissioner could now approve or disapprove any marriages of natives, and he could override the wishes of the couple themselves, their parents or kin. Applications had to be in writing and he could reject them if he thought the marriage contravened tribal custom, if he found the age disparity too great, if one of the parties suffered a communicable or hereditary disease, or (the catchall clause) if 'there are any other circumstances which render it advisable that the marriage should not take place'.[22]

However, despite the ambitions Neville may have harboured, and despite the apparent power the new Act gave him, it did not deliver

[21] Native Administration, *Acts of WA*, 1936, clauses 8 and 9, p 5; clause 19, pp 8–9

[22] Native Administration, *Acts of WA*, 1936, clauses 45 and 46, pp 18–20

him a policy that could be seriously used to breed out the colour. In reality, both the policy and his use of it were poorly conceived, unenforceable and virtually guaranteed to produce the opposite result than intended. There were five intractable problems.

1. The new policy left the great majority of Western Australian Aborigines untouched. Although the 1936 Act gave Neville wide powers to approve or disapprove of marriages between natives, the parliament never intended, nor did he ever countenance the idea, of using his authority to try to breed out the colour of the state's full-blood Aborigines. Since the passing of the 1905 Aborigines Act, Western Australia had legislated to keep its full-blood populations in isolation from white society. Although this was not feasible for all full-bloods, many of whom lived and worked on pastoral stations, the 1905 Act still prohibited sexual cohabitation between white people and all full-blood Aborigines.[23] In this, Western Australia followed the example established first in 1897 in Queensland and subsequently in the Northern Territory. The 1936 Act, which was technically an amendment of the 1905 Act, tightened the rules and stiffened the penalties for white people entering Western Australian reserves without permission or attempting to entice Aborigines to leave them. It modified the definitions of illicit sex to make prosecutions more likely and it increased the penalty for this offence to a £100 fine or a two-year term in prison.[24]

As noted above, in the 1930s more than 80 per cent of the state's 29,000 Aborigines were of full descent — about 15,000 of them having contact with whites on missions, government stations, pastoral stations and fringe camps around the larger towns of the north and north-west, plus another 10,000 (a rough estimate by the department) living traditional lives in the bush, beyond the limits of white settlement. None of these people were targeted by Neville's proposals for the absorption of part-Aborigines. Indeed, the greater penalties under the new Act for trespass and illicit contacts on reserves only served to further the isolation of the majority of the full-blood population. This was why the wording of Neville's motion to the 1937 Canberra conference insisted that 'the destiny of the natives of Aboriginal origin, *but not of the full blood*, lies in their ultimate absorption by the people of the Commonwealth.'

Neville had always been a firm supporter of the policy he inherited on full-blood people. Earlier in his career as Chief Protector, he had

[23] Pat Jacobs, *Mister Neville*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 1990, p 132

[24] Native Administration, *Acts of WA*, 1936, clauses 14, 15, 46, pp 6–7, 19–20; Neville in *Aboriginal Welfare*, p 36

overseen the expansion of Western Australia's Aboriginal reserves to no less than twenty million acres in the Kimberley and Central Australia where people of full descent could continue traditional lives. Throughout the 1920s he pressed the government to make the reserves inviolable from mineral exploration and pastoral expansion.[25] Those academics who now write about Neville as if his intention was to end the Aboriginal race in its entirety neglect to remind their readers of these facts. To do so, of course, would question the credibility of their accusation of his intention to commit genocide.

Some commentators try to rescue their position by claiming that Neville expected the full-blood population to die out anyway, because it was a 'doomed race'. Hence he only needed to concentrate his active attention on part-Aborigines. But as I show later in this chapter, that was not the demographic reality in Western Australia at the time, and Neville himself did not subscribe to such a belief.

2. The Commissioner had no authority over quarter-caste Aborigines or those of lighter caste. Because the Act exempted most people of quarter-caste descent from the definition of 'native', it prohibited them from associating with half-castes or full-blood Aborigines. While this was intended to prevent quarter-castes from marrying and having the children of full-bloods or half-castes, it also had the consequence of preventing the Commissioner from ensuring those of quarter-caste actually bred out the colour by marrying people of lighter hue. If most quarter-caste people preferred to mate with other quarter-castes, as they were wont to do, they would preserve their proportion of Aboriginal descent intact. If breeding out the colour had been taken seriously as policy, both the government and the Commissioner would have ensured he had the power to control quarter-caste marriages too. The fact that this authority was specifically excluded by the Act was revealing about how far the parliament supported its Commissioner's plans.

3. The scheme was premised on the behaviour of one sex only. Neville only entertained the presumption of part-Aboriginal women marrying white men. If he really sought to breed out Aboriginality, he should have considered the mathematics of the proposal. Only 50 per cent of the target population were part of his experiment. But the success of such a plan also necessitated part-Aboriginal men marrying white women. This, however, was an unlikely prospect in the Western Australia of his time, where there had always been a chronic shortage of available white women in rural districts and where part-Aboriginal men on the lowest rungs of the socio-economic hierarchy were the

[25] Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, pp 103–5

least likely to woo them. This rendered Neville's project unworkable. For every part-Aboriginal woman who lightened the skin colour of her children by marrying a white man, there would have been one part-Aboriginal man driven back into the half-caste or full-blood community in search of a mate.

Moreover, Neville never faced up to the fact that many part-Aboriginal women had tastes of their own that did not fit his plans. He could only approve, not compel marriages. What if his part-Aboriginal women were attracted not to pale-skinned husbands but to men of a darker hue? If the women did not fancy his match-making, there was nothing he could do. Peter Biskup summarized the inevitable outcome:

So the coloured people turned back to their own; marriages between part-aborigines and full-bloods increased; instead of being bred out, colour was being bred in.[26]

4. The 1936 Act's prohibitions on inter-racial sex worked against the scheme. The 1936 Act installed a powerful inhibitor to inter-racial sexual relations, thereby decreasing the likelihood that half-caste-Aboriginal women could maintain relationships with white men. By increasing the penalties for unmarried sex between natives and non-natives, the Act removed one of main inducements a half-caste Aboriginal woman formerly had to persuade a white man to marry her: because she was pregnant to him. After 1936, such a revelation would have consigned her white lover to prison and so, before the baby was born, he had a powerful incentive to decamp, thereby guaranteeing his offspring would not be reared in an assimilated family.

Neville told the 1937 conference that he was determined to protect the virtue of the girls his department sent into domestic service. So much so, that within a year of the new Act becoming law, about twelve white men had been prosecuted for having sex with half-caste girls.[27] It did not occur to him that the reputation the new law would gain from such prosecutions would obstruct the very outcome he sought.

5. The Commissioner had no effective control over most Aborigines in the state. Neville himself was forced to admit to his peers at the Canberra conference that he could not control marriage practices on his state's missions. He could try to control events at the little Moore River Settlement north of Perth but not in the squalid camps of fringe dwellers that attached themselves to most sizeable towns in the state in the 1920s and 1930s, nor on the eleven mission stations that served

[26] Biskup, *Not Slaves: Not Citizens*, p 193
[27] *Aboriginal Welfare*, p 12

the remote regions of Western Australia. On the latter, the missionaries pursued their own goals, with open disregard for the policies of his department. To conference delegates, Neville confessed the gap between his plans and what actually happened in the field:

> Under this law [the 1936 Act] no half-caste need be allowed to marry a full-blooded aboriginal if it is possible to avoid it, but the missions do not always take steps to prevent this from occurring; they allow the half-castes under their control to marry anybody.[28]

Neville had to live with the reality that the missions did the opposite to what he wanted, not only about marriage but in most other aspects of administration. While Neville favoured assimilation, the missions pursued segregation:

> At the mission stations, the natives are encouraged to multiply by marriage, with a consequent increase of population. The missions are thus able to claim that they are doing valuable work for the natives. Undoubtedly they are doing good work, but they keep an increasing number of natives on their properties, whereas the departmental institutions, whilst approving marriages, encourage the natives to mix with the general community, and earn their own living which, I am glad to say, they are doing.[29]

Even on more closely supervised terrain in the south of the state, Neville could not control the sexual behaviour of his charges. He could prevent them marrying but not from having illicit sex with those they preferred. The only place where he had any real opportunity to cordon off the sexes was among the inhabitants of the state's then sole government-funded residential community, the Moore River Native Settlement. Neville tried to prevent the half-caste girls in the dormitories of his training 'compound' from socializing with the half-caste young men at the adjacent 'camp'. The Royal Commissioner Henry Moseley found on a visit in 1934 that things were not going to plan.

> There are no means of keeping the inmates in the dormitories at night. The doors are locked, but latticed walls are easily broken and many cases are on record of the girls visiting the camp, a few hundred yards from the compound, after they are placed in the dormitories for the night ... At the present time all the inmates of the compound go to the football ground adjacent to the camp and, although under the supervision of the white assistant, no doubt many opportunities are afforded for arranging clandestine meetings and, as I have said, the girls find no difficulty in the way of keeping their appointments. In addition, although the Superintendent told me that no camp people are allowed in the compound after dark, this

[28] *Aboriginal Welfare*, p 11
[29] *Aboriginal Welfare*, p 11

> must be in theory only, for I myself saw on the night I was at Moore River many of the camp inmates, if not all of them, at a concert and dance held in the compound dining room.[30]

It was obvious that several of the delegates from other states attending the 1937 conference regarded Neville's scheme with disdain. Some politely concealed their disapproval behind pointed questions. At one stage, the Chief Protector of South Australia interrupted Neville's tedious reading aloud of verbatim text from the Western Australian legislation to make an observation that failed to elicit a straight answer:

> Mr McLean. — Even after five or six generations, the progeny of the continued marriages of half-castes will still be half-castes.
> Mr Neville. — Yes. But there is provision to exempt them from the act. All cases are judged on their merit. [returning to the Act] The provision covering such cases is as follows ... [31]

Similarly, a sceptical delegate from New South Wales, Dr E. S. Morris, asked Neville what percentage of the quarter-caste children at the Moore River Settlement married whites when they grew up. Neville replied lamely: 'There has not yet been time for them to grow up.'[32]

While Robert Manne and his colleagues would rather deploy loaded terminology like 'scientific racism' and 'genocidal thought' than describe this half-baked proposal in full, let alone admit its elementary unworkability, previous Western Australian historians had taken it far less seriously. In 1973, Peter Biskup had declared it 'an unequivocal failure' for at least three reasons: first, its definitions of 'natives' and its punitive approach to sexual liaisons worked directly against its ostensible aims; second, the economic depression that dogged the 1930s inhibited the prospect of economic assimilation; and third, popular racial prejudice still frowned upon mixed marriages. Hence the policy was 'quietly dropped'. Biskup observed:

> Interbreeding of races is normally one of the incidents of culture contact, and 'amalgamation' one of the indices, perhaps the ultimate index, of the extent of cultural fusion. But it is almost invariably an outcome rather than the cause of assimilation. Western Australian advocates of interbreeding were putting the sexual cart before the cultural horse.[33]

Recalling the 1930s, Paul Hasluck said the proposal was far too unpopular to have been politically acceptable. Discussing the ideas of the Perth physician, Dr Cyril Bryan, one of the few local enthusiasts

[30] Moseley, *Report of the Royal Commissioner*, p 12
[31] *Aboriginal Welfare*, p 21
[32] *Aboriginal Welfare*, p 17
[33] Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, pp 189–92

for the scheme, Hasluck wrote that such views were 'unacceptable to most people' at the time.

> Pragmatically I had some doubts whether people of either race would embrace his ideas as a set policy even if some of them continued to embrace each other physically. To advance miscegenation as a deliberate purpose of government and to campaign for it as the solution of a social problem was politically a certain loser.[34]

In her 1988 history of Aboriginal policy in the south-west, Anna Haebich reported that Neville retired in 1940, just three and a half years after the Canberra conference, his plans unfulfilled:

> The Act itself contained major flaws which hindered its effective implementation. The broader definition of 'native' together with the provisions limiting interaction of any kind between white and black served to harden rather than to break down 'caste barriers'. This guaranteed the continued exclusion of virtually all persons of Aboriginal descent from the wider community rather than their assimilation.[35]

Haebich wrote this in 1988 in *For Their Own Good*, a study of Aboriginal policy in the south-west of Western Australia. It was a fair assessment. However, by 2000, when she wrote *Broken Circles*, a study of child removal policies throughout Australia that capitalized on the public attention generated by the *Bringing Them Home* report, she took a line more in tune with the times. Haebich downplayed the unworkability of Neville's scheme and only discussed what the Western Australian commissioner could do with Aborigines in theory, not what he was actually *un*able to do with them in practice.[36]

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A. O. NEVILLE'S IDEAS

A. O. Neville was the son of an English clergyman. He migrated to Western Australia in 1897 and made a career in the state public service where he rose to become head of the state's immigration services. In 1915, as a cost-saving measure, the government amalgamated some departments and appointed him Chief Protector of Aborigines, even though he had no background in Aboriginal affairs, little interest in the people, and resented the reduction in his responsibilities and status.[37] He made no radical changes but continued the policies then in place. In the far south of the state, he continued the construction of a welfare settlement at Carrolup, near Katanning, to

[34] Hasluck, *Shades of Darkness*, p 30
[35] Haebich, *For Their Own Good*, p 352
[36] Anna Haebich, *Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families 1800–2000*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 2000, p 279
[37] Jacobs, *Mister Neville*, pp 53–65

feed and house the destitute members of the predominantly half-caste local population, and give their children an education. He set in train the establishment of a new settlement of the same kind at Moore River, near the Mogumber railway siding about 130 km north of Perth. In the Kimberley district, he continued policies to preserve intact the ethnicity of what he called 'the virile full-bloods of the north'. He wanted to establish reserves that were off limits to white people, where people of full descent could maintain their tribal identity, but where their children could also be given the chance to go to school.[38]

Neville had long regretted his own lack of education, especially in anthropology, or ethnology, as he called it. 'How much worry I would have been saved,' he said in one speech in 1930, 'had I received training in ethnology, it has taken me all these years to acquire such knowledge.'[39] He urged those working in the field of Aboriginal affairs to gain university training, and when Professor A. P. Elkin of the University of Sydney asked for permission to do fieldwork in the Kimberley, Neville cultivated a relationship with him. In the 1920s, Neville embarked on a program of reading in order to familiarize himself with the Australian anthropological literature.

Some of the principal influences on Neville's thinking came from the writings of the South Australian anthropologist and explorer Dr Herbert Basedow. In an article for the *West Australian* in January 1930, Neville quoted Basedow's report on the full-blood people of the central and western deserts who were of 'splendid physique, intelligence and general appearance'. The British in Australia had a moral duty, Neville argued, to preserve such people. He wrote:

> We know that there has been wanton and unwarranted destruction of black life for which our race is responsible, but if we work on right lines now it may be contended in days to come that the white man eventually saved the black man from entire extinction.[40]

At the same time, Neville was also taking note of Basedow's argument that the biological differences between whites and Aborigines were superficial, more a matter of skin pigment than anything more fundamental, and that half-castes were hardly a different people at all. He was particularly influenced by Basedow's 1925 book, *The Australian Aboriginal*, which he read and underlined the following passages:

> The aboriginal is no more black than the average European is white ... The colour question, so far as the Australian aborigine is concerned, is a

[38] Jacobs, *Mister Neville*, pp 66–73
[39] Jacobs, *Mister Neville*, p 204
[40] A. O. N. (pseudonym) in *West Australian*, 29 January 1930, cited by Jacobs, *Mister Neville*, p 188

> relative conception, the difference in the amount of pigment in his skin and in the 'white' man's skin being in all probability due to climatic influence extending over long periods of time ... Apart from its great scientific significance, this matter is of considerable social and national interest to citizens of Australia and we might well ask ourselves: are we justified in referring to the half-blooded aboriginal, with European parentage on one side, as a half-caste, or even in stigmatizing him as a bastard.[41]

Basedow was born in South Australia to a German immigrant family, and had studied physical anthropology at German universities. However, his work was not influenced by Social Darwinism or eugenics theory. Like almost everyone at the time, he still subscribed to the eighteenth-century theory of racial classifications of Johann Friedrich Blumenbach. Basedow thought humanity was divided into three great races, Caucasoid, Mongoloid and Negroid. However, he was convinced from his observations and measurements of Australian Aborigines that they had been among the early members of the Caucasoid rather than Negroid race and that their darker skin was no more than a local adaptation to greater exposure to sunlight. He also thought that modern Europeans had once been of darker colour but had become whiter during the last ice age and the Holocene era when they housed themselves in caves and huts.[42] Despite external appearances, he said the Aborigines were members of the same race as Europeans.

Basedow did his postgraduate work in Germany immediately before World War I, a place and time when radical theories about race predominated. However, his politics were those of the British humanitarian movement which, after ending slavery in the nineteenth century, subsequently kept a watching brief over the treatment of indigenous peoples in the Empire. He figured in Henry Reynolds's book on the humanitarian movement for Aborigines in Australia, *This Whispering in Our Hearts*. Reynolds described him simply as a 'prominent scientist' and either did not know, or declined to inform his readers, of his influence on A. O. Neville. In Adelaide in 1926 Basedow became chairman of the Aborigines Protection League (Native State), an organization that wanted Aborigines to have land rights, self-determination and even an Aboriginal state.[43] In other words, Basedow, the man who provided the intellectual foundations

[41] Herbert Basedow, *The Australian Aboriginal*, F. W. Preece and Sons, Adelaide, 1925, pp 40, 59–60. Jacobs, *Mister Neville*, p 194, has pointed out the marks Neville left on his copy of the book.

[42] Basedow, *The Australian Aboriginal*, pp 40–5

[43] Henry Reynolds, *This Whispering in Our Hearts*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1998, pp 227–8

for breeding out the colour, also wrote the first full agenda for modern Aboriginal left-wing politics.

Neville was far from the only public figure attracted to Basedow's ideas. His followers also included Professor J. B. Cleland of the University of Adelaide and the anthropologist Norman Tindale of the South Australian Museum. In Queensland, the Director of Health Sir Raphael Cilento was also an adherent.[44] In particular, Basedow was an influential author among intellectual circles of the far Left. In 1929, the Communist author Katherine Susannah Prichard prefaced her novel *Coonardoo*, a story of a sexual and emotional relationship between a white pastoral station owner and an Aboriginal housemaid, with an endorsement of Basedow's ideas about the biological compatibility of such unions. Prichard wrote:

> Basedow in *The Australian Aboriginal* says, 'Anthropological relationship connects the Australian (including the proto-Australian) with the Veddahs and Dravidians of India and with the fossil men of Europe, from whom the Caucasian element has sprung.' They are only a few generations removed, after all, Coonardoo and Andromache. 'In other words, the Australian aboriginal stands somewhere near the bottom rung of the great evolutional ladder we have ascended.' His and our 'racial development was very early disassociated from the Mongoloid and Negroid lines'.[45]

Like Neville, these authors concluded that there were no essential obstacles to the eventual biological and social absorption of the part-Aboriginal population into that of white Australia. Indeed, Neville was at pains to point out how readily the idea, once publicly accepted, could be applied in practice. In another article for the *West Australian* in June 1930, he argued that a mixture of European and Aboriginal parentage often produced very attractive people.

> The quadroon and octoroon are scarcely distinguishable from the white. Many are handsome, even beautiful, gentle-mannered, soft-voiced girls, speaking perfectly enunciated, if somewhat abbreviated English. Is there to be a colour bar?[46]

Within the detribalized populations of Western Australia, Neville told the 1937 Canberra conference the demographic trends favoured the half-castes. There were 10,000 detribalized full-bloods, of whom 1932 were children. But of the 2559 detribalized half-castes, he said, some 2000 were children. Hence, he thought if these rates continued

[44] Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, p 188

[45] Katherine Susannah Prichard, 'Foreword', *Coonardoo*, Jonathan Cape, London 1929, reprinted in A&R Classics edition, HarperCollins, Sydney, 2002, pp xxi–xxii

[46] A. O. N. (pseudonym), *West Australian*, 18 June 1930, cited by Jacobs, *Mister Neville*, p 193

for long enough the half-caste population would eventually predominate.[47] Neville told delegates his main policy goal was to manage this development by integrating part-Aborigines into the general community.

> How can we keep them apart from the community? Our own population is not increasing at such a rapid rate as to lead us to expect that there will be a great many more white people in that area [the south-west of Western Australia] 25 years hence than there are at present. The aborigines have inter-married with our people. I know of some 80 white men who are married to native women, with whom they are living happy, contented lives, so I see no objection to the ultimate absorption into our own race of the whole of the existing Australian native race. In order to do this we must guard the health of the natives in every possible way so they may be, physically, as fit as possible.[48]

The policy tools he wanted to produce this outcome were improvements in health, education and vocational training. Given the parsimony of the state government in the 1930s — expenditure on Aborigines per head in Western Australia was less than one-fifth that of New South Wales and less than half that of Queensland[49] — Neville wanted the Commonwealth to provide funding for vocational training. It deserves emphasizing that he made this demand to the Canberra conference not through any appeal to 'scientific racism' but on the grounds of treating all part Aborigines as equals:

> The children must be trained as we would train our own children. The stigma at present attaching to half-castes must be banished. In Western Australia half-caste boys and men take part in football, cricket and other games on a footing equal to that of their white clubmates, but are excluded from the social life of the community. They feel this deeply, as do their white companions in sport. This state of affairs will have to disappear.[50]

This is an unusual combination of beliefs that defies the kneejerk categorization to which Neville is commonly subjected today. Although portrayed by academic historians as a single-minded eugenicist, the reality was otherwise. Neville certainly supported, as his critics say, the long-term goal of 'the ultimate absorption into our own race of the whole of the existing Australian native race'. Yet he

[47] *Aboriginal Welfare*, p 16. According to the census in his own 1936 annual report, the figures for half-caste children Neville gave to the 1937 conference were exaggerated.
[48] *Aboriginal Welfare*, p 11
[49] Moseley, *Report of the Royal Commissioner*, p 23
[50] *Aboriginal Welfare*, pp 11–12

cannot be described as the architect of any kind of *systematic* program that might bring this about.

From the time he conceived the theory of breeding out the colour in the late 1920s until he retired in 1940, Neville's department founded only one new institution of its own, the Native Girls' Home at East Perth, which accommodated only twelve girls.[51] Established in 1932, the home took girls already inmates of the Moore River Settlement, gave them a brief introduction to domestic service and found them positions in that field. As Chapter Eight discusses in more detail, it retained its original purpose for only a few years and, like Moore River itself, had virtually no impact on the overall assimilation of part-Aboriginal people. Neville talked a lot but did very little. His timetables for action were elusive. He told the 1937 Canberra conference that assimilation would soon be possible in the south of the state, but this was just grandstanding to impress his peers, devoid of any feasible plan of action and the funding required. He guessed it might take another 25 years in the north-west and even 50 years in the far north. It was, he said, 'a long-sighted policy'.[52]

On the other hand, he believed the absorption project was possible only because people of Aboriginal descent were inherently equal to Europeans, and members of the same racial stock. Given proper education, he thought them the intellectual match of whites. In other words, if the term 'racist' entails a belief that one group is racially inferior to another, then Neville did not believe it about the Aborigines.

NEVILLE AND THE 'DOOMED RACE' THEORY

Neville is often charged with a callous disregard for the fate of full-blood Aborigines, who he expected to die out. This accusation is sometimes the nub of the allegation of genocide against him. Raimond Gaita and others have argued that the removal of part-Aboriginal children to 'breed out the colour' was genocidal because it coincided with the belief by the relevant authorities in the 'doomed race' theory that full-bloods would naturally die out. Hence, those who wanted an Australia free of Aborigines only needed to direct their actions against part-Aborigines.[53] In its argument for genocide, the Human Rights Commission agreed:

[51] Neville evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 14 March 1934, transcript p 133

[52] *Aboriginal Welfare*, p 11

[53] Raimond Gaita, 'The Stolen Children', *Quadrant*, January–February 1998, p 4. Ronald Wilson made the same accusation in the speech cited above, alleging the 1937 conference 'didn't have to worry about them [full-bloods];

> A. O. Neville, Western Australia's Chief Protector (1915–40) believed he could do nothing' for 'full-bloods', who were thought to be dying out. However, he could absorb the 'half-castes'.[54]

In Neville's case, the assumption behind these assertions is simply not true, as Gaita would have known had he read the full text of the 1937 Canberra conference's proceedings, and as the members of the Human Rights Commission would have known had they read any of the original sources for themselves. Neville told the 1937 conference with some satisfaction that the birth rate to full-bloods on government-owned cattle stations in the far north, such as Moola Bulla in the Kimberley, was increasing. This was thanks to his own department's policies designed for that very end. 'It is interesting to note,' he said, 'that on the departmental cattle stations established in the far north for the preservation of these people, the number of full-blood children is increasing, because of the care the people get.'[55] This view was consistent with population figures Neville had earlier compiled for his 1932 annual report.

The most detailed analysis of Aboriginal demography in Western Australia from 1900 to 1940 is by Gordon Briscoe, who has demonstrated that accurate figures are hard to come by because the statistics are fraught with shifting census definitions and unreliable estimates. However, Briscoe's case largely supported Neville's view of the trends in the full-blood population over this period. Briscoe wrote:

> Assumptions about a 'disappearing population' often made by [Daisy] Bates and her contemporaries eventually proved to be a fiction. This was not easy to see at the time, however. Despite claims about a disappearing Aboriginal race, the number of Aboriginal people of Western Australia — people of full and mixed descent — actually continued growing. This resulted from the Aborigines own internal population dynamics and government relief and protection policies.[56]

they were dying out'. Robert Manne also claims this was part of Neville's repertoire of genocidal beliefs: *In Denial*, p 40. Anna Haebich repeated the argument in two books, *For Their Own Good*, p 156, and *Broken Circles*, p 273, where, for instance, she claimed: 'Neville remained convinced that Aborigines of full descent were doomed to extinction.'

[54] Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children From Their Families*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, April 1997, p 274. The Commission's source for this claim was a secondary source: Haebich, *For Their Own Good*, p 156

[55] *Aboriginal Welfare*, p 16

[56] Gordon Briscoe, *Counting, Health and Identity: A History of Aboriginal Health and Demography in Western Australia and Queensland*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2003, p 1

The only population Neville did believe was in decline was that of full-blooded Aborigines still living in traditional society in the bush. 'In my opinion, no matter what we do, they will die out,' he said. He did not support the 'doomed race' theory but blamed 'their own tribal practices' of abortion and infanticide, which were routinely practised in bad seasons. Repeated abortions had rendered many tribal women sterile, he said, so few could still bear children.[57]

Whatever anyone thinks about the reasons Neville gave for his demographic predictions, his interpretation of the statistical trends turned out to be close to the mark. More recent studies of the demography have revealed an increase in the full-blood population on government stations was matched by a decline of those living in the bush. Briscoe calculated that over the period 1924 to 1940 the total full-blood population in the state remained fairly stable around a figure of 22,000.[58]

NEVILLE'S 'ULTIMATE SOLUTION' FOR PART-ABORIGINES

> Neville's 'ultimate solution' was a genocidal plan that meets the terms of the UN Convention on Genocide, including the thorny issue of 'intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, or racial or religious group'. The policy represented the culmination of over twenty years of conflict in the south.
>
> — Anna Haebich, 'Clearing the Wheat Belt', 2004[59]

Another of the unchallenged contentions in the debate is that people who were of mixed race, that is, of part-Aboriginal and part-European parentage, always identified themselves as Aborigines. The Human Rights Commission asserted the notion in *Bringing Them Home* with the sweeping generalization: 'Aboriginal society regards any child of Aboriginal descent as Aboriginal.'[60] This assumption is another key premise of those who make the charge of genocide. On this logic, any attempt to biologically absorb part-Aborigines as a group into the white community would be like doing the same to full-blood Aborigines, and hence genocidal by definition.

The authors of *Bringing Them Home* offered no reference or other support for their assertion. In fact, the proposition is patently untrue. There was no such thing as an 'Aboriginal society' with a uniform set of prescriptions on these matters. Among different Aboriginal groups

[57] *Aboriginal Welfare*, p 16

[58] Briscoe, *Counting, Health and Identity*, Table 1.10, pp 39–40

[59] Anna Haebich, ' "Clearing the Wheat Belt": Erasing the Indigenous Presence in the Southwest of Western Australia', in Dirk Moses, ed, *Genocide and Settler Society*, Berghan Books, New York, 2004, p 284

[60] *Bringing Them Home*, p 272

there has long been a wide range of beliefs that range from acceptance as a member of the community of any child born to an Aboriginal woman, to the notion that a half-caste baby born to the group should be put to death.[61]

In Western Australia, Anna Haebich has claimed that in the 1930s the part-Aborigines of the south all shared the one ethnic identity and that the 1936 Act 'threatened the southern Aborigines' very existence as a distinct racial and ethnic community'.[62] She made this charge in a 2004 article whose subtitle and subheadings provide some idea of her case: 'Erasing the Indigenous Presence in the Southwest of Western Australia', 'Incremental Genocide', 'Extermination by Neglect', 'A Eugenic Solution?'

Some genocide. Incorporated within Haebich's article were population statistics which revealed that during the period Neville was supposedly working to eradicate the southern half-castes, their numbers more than doubled. From a total of 1200 people in 1900, she admitted their population increased by the mid-1930s to more than 2500.[63] To be more precise, the annual census in the 1935–36 annual report of the Chief Protector listed 2640 half-caste people in the South West Division, a 120 per cent increase in just 35 years.[64]

Haebich offered no explanation why Neville's 'ultimate solution' was so ineffectual it was accompanied by a population boom. In fact, she did not even realize these numbers posed a knockdown argument against her case. Moreover, this demographic phenomenon was by no means confined to the south-west of Western Australia. As I noted in Chapter Two, between 1915 and 1940 New South Wales experienced something similar. There the Aboriginal population grew by 65 per cent in 25 years in the face of what Peter Read claimed was a campaign of genocide by the Aborigines Protection Board. So far, this inconvenient truth appears to have escaped the notice not only of

[61] Evidence for the routine killing of half-caste babies has been provided by both anthropologists and Aboriginal women themselves from places as far distant as south-west New South Wales in the late-nineteenth century, to Central Australia in the mid-twentieth century. For anthropologists see the review of the literature by Kenneth Maddock, 'Genocide and the Silence of the Anthropologists', *Quadrant*, November 2000, p 13; for Aboriginal women see: Theresa Clements, *From Old Maloga: The Memoirs of an Aboriginal Woman*, Fraser & Morphet printers, Prahran, 193_, p 2; and Annette Roberts, *Sister Eileen: A Life With the Lid Off*, Access Press, Bassendean, 2002, p 176

[62] Haebich, *For Their Own Good*, p 349

[63] Haebich, 'Clearing the Wheat Belt', p 281

[64] *Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for the year ended 30th June, 1936*, Government Printer, Perth, 1936, pp 20–1

Australian historians but also of the editors and academic peer reviewers of the *Journal of Genocide Research*. When it finally sinks in, it might dampen the latter's enthusiasm for the volume of articles they currently accept from Australia.

There is another problem with Haebich's case, not quite as embarrassing but just as damaging. This is her claim that the part-Aborigines of the southwest of Western Australia constituted 'a distinct racial and ethnic community'. There are first-hand observations from the period that show the great majority of the part-Aboriginal people discussed here did *not* regard themselves as members of any such community. In 1934, a young journalist on the *West Australian* newspaper, Paul Hasluck, investigated living conditions of what he called 'our southern half-castes'. In the course of a long investigation he spoke to almost every Aboriginal adult in the region and a large number of part-Aboriginal youths. He found few of them had any connections to traditional Aboriginal culture or ways of thinking. They had never inhabited a society ruled by indigenous government, laws or local social systems. They had never been deprived of the traditional hunter-gatherer economy or social system because that was all gone long before their time. Most of these people were born within the farmlands of the Great Southern districts and made a living as seasonal and casual employees of white farmers. They identified more with white people than as Aborigines.

> In those days [the 1930s] most of the mixed race people [in the south] were living apart from Aborigines and the popular belief among the whites and the common hope of the mixed-race people themselves was that they should live in the white community. As a body, half-caste Aborigines were rejected by the aboriginal people as not being true Aborigines at all. It seemed that they were moving in one direction away from the aboriginal side of their ancestry.[65]

Some part-Aborigines were strongly determined *not* to be known as Aborigines. 'Their main hope was to escape the notice of the Protector of Aborigines,' Hasluck wrote, 'and to be accepted as ordinary members of the Australian community.' People in this state of transition did not want to draw attention to themselves and hoped to pass unnoticed by the government bureaucracy. One father with a wife and three daughters told him:

> I've never been an abo and I'm not going to have my girls brought up with the blacks. My only aim in life is to keep out of the clutches of that

[65] Hasluck, *Shades of Darkness*, p 69

man Neville and the less anyone knows about us the better. My girls are never going into the blacks' camp.[66]

In short, the southern half-caste population did not constitute a distinct racial community, but nor were they integrated into the mainstream white society at the time. They suffered badly from unemployment during the Great Depression, which halted what until then had been their progressive assimilation. In the 1930s, they remained suspended by economic adversity between the white and black cultural worlds. Nonetheless, their own inclinations were clear. Although their cultural movement slowed, it remained headed in the same direction, away from the Aboriginal side of their ancestry. This was not something that had been, or even could be, determined by Neville's department. It was a product of their own decisions based on their own economic and social situation.

ARRANGED MARRIAGES IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

Dr Cecil Cook was Chief Protector of Aborigines in the Northern Territory from 1927 to 1939. Like Neville, he was an authoritarian official who never questioned his right to act without consulting his charges. At the 1937 conference, he said his main concern was a potential demographic explosion among the half-castes. At the time, the Territory had 4000 whites and 900 half-castes.[67] Cook was anything but a far-sighted administrator. During his time in the Territory he remained dubious about its prospects for development of any kind. He was especially pessimistic about the ability of the local economy ever to sustain a large population. Even the planned establishment of a naval base and airport at Darwin, he thought, would not lift the total number of white inhabitants of the Territory beyond 10,000 to 12,000 in the next half-century.

The only population group he thought would grow substantially was that of half-castes. He presented figures to the 1937 Canberra conference showing that the birth-rate among Territory whites was 0.3 per thousand (much less than the replacement rate), but among half-castes was 18 per 1000 (well above the replacement rate). However, his prediction of what this meant was full of gloom. In 50 years time, he said, the Territory would suffer an employment crisis, with not enough jobs to go around. Most of the half-castes would be unable to find work. The lack of jobs would then produce a political crisis. If they were not educated but 'maintained at an inferior status', the unemployed half-castes 'will probably rise in revolt', or at least pose a serious racial problem. He was especially concerned to avoid a

[66] Hasluck, *Shades of Darkness*, pp 38–9
[67] *Aboriginal Welfare*, p 13

situation like that in the United States where the blacks formed a depressed underclass and were the objects of white violence.[68]

Cook's vision of the Territory's demographic and employment future turned out to be hopelessly astray. From about 4800 whites and 15,400 Aborigines in the mid-1930s, over the following 50 years the population grew to more than 123,000.[69] Nonetheless, in the 1930s when the experience of the Great Depression permeated the economic outlook of most Australians, Cook was not out of step with his time. He viewed the prospects of those he had to 'protect' with unease. He was especially concerned about the influence of the Communist Party among Aboriginal labourers in Darwin, who he thought were 'perennially destitute, a prey to agitators'. Cook's alternative to all this was assimilation:

> If, on the other hand, the half-caste is raised to the level of the whites, he will be able to migrate to other parts of Australia, and compete there with white men on an equal footing should employment not be available for him in the territory. That would relieve the tension in the territory. After consideration of these alternatives, the Commonwealth decided to raise the half-caste to the level of the whites. The children are to be educated as whites and apprenticed in industry as whites, and will compete in the labour market as whites. So far, the Commonwealth has seen no reason to regret the policy it has adopted, although it has been in operation for only seven or eight years.[70]

He was serious about the education potential of half-caste children. He disagreed with the New South Wales' education department, which thought half-castes incapable of education beyond Third Grade, and agued they should receive a full primary school education to Sixth Grade, like most white children. He successfully lobbied to change Territory policy to that end, especially at the Bungalow, the home for half-caste children at Alice Springs. One of his recent critics commends him for his success here:

> It seems no coincidence that within two years of Cook's departure from the Territory, [Bungalow] inmates began winning highly competitive scholarships to secondary school in open competition with non-Aboriginal children. In fact, by the time Cook left the Territory, a foundation

[68] *Aboriginal Welfare*, pp 13, 34

[69] The closest available census figures are for 1933, when the territory held 4850 whites and 15,386 Aborigines, and 1981, when the total population of 123,324 included 29,086 Aborigines: Wray Vampley, ed., *Australians: Historical Statistics*, Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, Sydney, 1987, pp 4, 26

[70] *Aboriginal Welfare*, p 13

> had been laid for real subsequent improvements in northern attitudes towards, and employment prospects of, Half-caste people.[71]

Even Henry Reynolds had a positive word to say about Cook's views on intermarriage. In his book about half-castes, *Nowhere People* (2005), Reynolds wrote:

> Central to Cook's thinking was a view of miscegenation that at the time was quite progressive. When many in the community were still convinced that half-castes were degenerate and that they inherited the worst qualities of both parental races, he argued that race mixing would bring advantages.[72]

Cook's policies for full-blood Aborigines were also 'quite progressive' for the times. Again, he might be justly accused of authoritarianism and of deciding what was best for people without consulting them. He was also one of those who thought that, if they were not given protection, the full-blood Aborigines living tribal lives in northern Australia would eventually die out from disease and starvation and because the women would all eventually be rendered infertile by the advance of gonorrhoea.[73] But he took a different view about those full-bloods who came under the protection of the government on reserves and in white settlements. He thought many could eventually be educated to the same standards as whites and could be trained for employment in the modern economy, but he also wanted to preserve on 'inviolable reserves' those who preferred to live in traditional society. Mindful of the sensitivities of the northern trade union movement and its policy of job preference for white labourers, Cook wanted vocational training to prepare full-blood Aborigines for what he called 'lucrative occupations' that did not compete with whites.

In essence, Cook wanted to keep all full-blood Aborigines segregated from the white population but to offer those of them who became detribalized the same degree of educational and employment opportunities he sought for half-castes. How this was to actually occur in the kind of segregated economy he envisaged, he never explained in detail. Nonetheless, at the Canberra conference he successfully proposed the following motion:

> That this conference affirms the principle that the general policy in respect of full-blood natives should be —

[71] Tony Austin, 'Cecil Cook, Scientific Thought and Half-Castes', *Aboriginal History*, 14, 1, 1990, p 119
[72] Reynolds, *Nowhere People*, p 170
[73] *Aboriginal Welfare*, p 14

> (a) To educate to a white standard, children of the detribalized living near centres of white population, and subsequently to place them in employment in lucrative occupations, which will not bring them into economic or social conflict with the white community;
>
> (b) To keep the semi-civilized under a benevolent supervision in regard to employment, social and medical services in their own tribal areas. Small local reserves selected for tribal suitability should be provided in these tribal areas where unemployable natives may live as nearly as possible a normal tribal life, and unobjectionable tribal ceremonies may continue and to which employees may repair when unemployed. The ultimate destiny of these people should be their elevation to class (a);
>
> (c) To preserve as far as possible the uncivilized native in his normal tribal state by the establishment of inviolable reserves; each State or Territory determining for itself whether mission activities should be conducted on these reserves and the conditions under which they may be permitted.[74]

It is important to emphasize that this was Cook's vision for the great majority of the Aboriginal population of the Northern Territory. At the time, the full-blood population totalled about 15,000 while there were fewer than 1000 half-castes.[75] The plans he had for breeding out the colour were confined to the latter minority group.

Like Neville, Cook assumed control over the marriage of half-caste girls and sought to induce them to marry white men. He did not push this line at the 1937 Canberra conference but earlier, in 1933, he had outlined a plan to convert otherwise illegitimate sexual relationships between white men and Aboriginal women into reputable arrangements sanctioned by marriage. As I noted above, Cook justified this in the same terms as Neville: 'Every endeavour is being made to breed out the colour by elevating female half-castes to white standard with a view to their absorption by mating into the white population.'

But also, like Neville, Cook's ideas did not neatly fit the concept of racism. He too was strongly influenced by Herbert Basedow's ideas and regarded Aborigines not as members of a different race but as dark-skinned Caucasians. He strongly disagreed with the notion that the progeny of mixed marriages would be inferior. On the contrary, he argued these children would enhance the racial stock of the Territory's population by reproducing the best qualities of both white and black. He observed that, at present, there was not much difference between the conditions in Aboriginal camps on the fringes of white settlements and those inhabited by many of the Territory's

[74] *Aboriginal Welfare*, p 34

[75] Wray Vampley, ed., *Australians: Historical Statistics*, p 4; Cook in *Aboriginal Welfare*, p 13

white labourers and station hands. He wanted the latter to marry and set up respectable households. While his terminology was patronizing and condescending to both Aborigines and poor whites alike, and he had an unfortunate tendency to use concepts derived from the breeding of animals when discussing his proposals for Aboriginal women, his ambitions for them were not racist but egalitarian:

> Many such men would be prepared to marry half-caste females and make decent homes. Provided the girl has been reared to a moderately high standard there can be no objection to such a mating resulting as it does in the white man rearing a white family in good circumstances instead of a half-caste family under degrading conditions. Experience shows that the half-caste girl can, if properly brought up, easily be elevated to a standard where the fact of her marriage to a white will not contribute to his deterioration. On the contrary, under conditions in the Territory where such marriages are socially accepted among a certain section of the population, the results are more beneficial than otherwise since the deterioration of the white is thereby arrested and the local population is stabilized by the building of homes. It is not to be supposed that such marriages are likely to produce an inferior generation. On the contrary a large proportion of the half-caste female population is derived from the best white stock in the country whilst the aboriginal inheritance brings to the hybrid definite qualities of value — intelligence, stamina, resource, high resistance to the influences of the tropical environment and the character of pigmentation which even in high dilution will serve to reduce the at present high incidence of Skin Cancer in the blonde European.[76]

Again, like Neville, Cook's assumption in all this was of half-caste women marrying white men. He never entertained the prospect of half-caste men marrying white women. Hence, for the same reasons as Neville, the notion that he might be able to 'breed out the colour' was virtually impossible from the outset. Moreover, Cook found very few half-caste women prepared to accept the partners he found for them. In 1933 he gave the writer Ernestine Hill a less than upbeat account of his track record:

> These marriages are taking place at the rate of three or four a year. Some of them have been happy and satisfactory. Some have not.[77]

Cook confessed to the 1937 conference that in the previous seven or eight years he had only been able to arrange for between 40 and 50 coloured girls to marry whites.[78]

[76] Cook to Weddell, 27 June 1933, National Archives of Australia, Commonwealth Records Series, Department of the Interior file A659/1, 1940/1/408, pp 50–1

[77] reproduced in Rowena MacDonald, ed., *Between Two Worlds: The Commonwealth Government and the Removal of Aboriginal Children of Part Descent in the Northern Territory*, IAD Press, Alice Springs, 1995, p 25

As I discuss in detail below, in 1933 Cook's scheme was put to Federal Cabinet but was not accepted as Commonwealth policy. Indeed, the Lyons government regarded it as a public embarrassment. Shortly after he addressed the Canberra conference, Cook lost what little political support he retained. In a cabinet reshuffle, the portfolio of Minister for the Interior, who controlled the Northern Territory, went to John McEwen. The new minister promptly announced 'a new deal' for Aborigines. He disregarded Cook and began taking advice from anthropologist Professor A. P. Elkin who supported more gradual and separate development. By 1939 when Cook was replaced as Chief Protector, he had virtually given up any kind of match-making and was not fussy about who the girls in his care married.[79] In his last full year in office, he gave permission for nine half-caste women to marry — six to Europeans and three to half-caste males. He also allowed one European to marry a full-blood Aboriginal woman.[80] His efforts made virtually no impact on the ethnic mix of the Territory's population.

J. W. BLEAKLEY'S DEFENCE OF SEGREGATION

So many other details of the 1937 Canberra conference have been subject in recent years to such an academic beat-up that earlier historians who reported it in some depth, such as Charles Rowley in *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society* (1970),[81] would hardly recognize the same meeting. For instance, Robert Manne claims that A. O. Neville was 'the intellectually dominant figure in the Canberra discussions'. Manne wants his readers to believe that Neville's radical version of assimilation thus reflected the national policy of the day. The biographer Pat Jacobs thought the conference was 'a personal triumph' for Neville.[82]

It is true that Neville moved the major resolution of the conference, 'that the destiny of the natives of Aboriginal origin, but not of the full blood, lies in their ultimate absorption by the people of the Commonwealth', but this particular resolution passed unanimously not because everyone was suddenly converted to a new and daring

[78] *Aboriginal Welfare*, p 17. Russell McGregor confirmed this. From the Chief Protector's annual reports he calculated that in his eleven years in the job, Cook celebrated less than fifty such marriages: McGregor, 'The Importance of Being White', p 289

[79] Austin, 'Cecil Cook', p 116

[80] *Report of the Administration of the Northern Territory for Year 1937–38*, p 24

[81] Rowley, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, pp 319–28

[82] Jacobs, *Mister Neville*, p 255

approach but because it expressed the existing practice of most state governments.

There were two quite different kinds of policy regimes represented at the Canberra conference. One was in southern Australia, especially New South Wales and Victoria, where the frontier was long gone, where few full-blood and hardly any tribal Aborigines remained, and where by 1937 almost half were housed on government-provisioned missions, reserves and stations. They were already largely absorbed into white society, by both education and employment, and, as Chapter Three demonstrated, this had begun in the nineteenth century, even though the Great Depression of the 1930s had appreciably slowed the rate. The other regime prevailed across northern Australia, where there were still nomadic hunter-gatherers in the Northern Territory, Western Australia, some parts of Queensland and Central Australia, plus a variety of other officially termed 'semi-civilized' peoples living through casual work and the handouts of white settlement. The resolution's qualifier, that it would not try to absorb full-blood Aborigines into white society, reflected existing practice about this second group.

The obviously dominant policy maker for the latter group of states was not Neville but John William Bleakley, Chief Protector of Queensland since 1913. The conference of 1937 deferred to his reputation in the field, allowing him to be the first of the protectors to address it. Since 1897 Queensland had provided the model for the system of reserves subsequently established across Australia. It was the model for the basic legislation of Western Australia in 1905, for South Australia in 1910–11, and for the Northern Territory Aboriginals Act of 1910 and Aboriginal Ordinances of 1911. Queensland dominated Aboriginal policy in Australia for the first half of the twentieth century.[83]

In 1928 Prime Minister Stanley Bruce commissioned Bleakley to investigate and advise on conditions in northern and central Australia. Bleakley's report to the Commonwealth the following year formed the basis of subsequent policy across almost the entire north of the continent. 'Bleakley's recommendations for the Territory,' wrote Charles Rowley, 'were mainly for the introduction of Queensland policy there.'[84] Bleakley wanted to preserve the full-bloods on reserves where they would continue to live a largely tribal existence

[83] Rowley, *Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, pp 182–3. According to Rowley, p 230: 'The Northern Territory Aboriginals Act of 1910 passed by the South Australian parliament in preparation for the Commonwealth administration [in 1911], shows the strong influence of the Queensland and Western Australian models.'

[84] Rowley, *Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, p 269

for the time being, with the prospect of eventual assimilation on the distant horizon, several generations away. It was because of Bleakley's recommendations that most of Arnhem Land became reserved for Aboriginal people and most of the large islands off the northern coast, in particular Bathurst, Melville and Wessel Islands, also became reserves.[85] He wanted to oversee the 'gradual adaptation of the nomads to the settled life'.[86] But this did not involve any attempt to determine who they married. He specifically repudiated Cook's ideas about controlling the marriage of half-caste people. He argued there should be no laws preventing half-castes marrying back into the full-blood community. Indeed, he thought they were happier doing so. In his report to the Prime Minister, Bleakley wrote:

> Inquiries from all classes of persons with experience of dealing with aboriginal half-castes, such as station owners, missionaries, police &c., only confirm my own opinion that, without appreciable exception, the half-caste of 50 per cent or more aboriginal blood, no matter how carefully brought up and educated, will drift back to the aboriginal, where naturally he finds the atmosphere most congenial to him. Educated Aboriginals and half-castes, who have married back amongst the full bloods on missions and settlements, when questioned, were emphatic in the opinion that these people were happier amongst their own race.[87]

Consequently, he recommended that the Commonwealth government continue to allow half-caste people the freedom to make their own marital choices:

> *Marriage of Half-castes and Full Bloods.*—Like everyone else, the half-caste prefers to marry where fancy dictates, and where there is freedom of choice it is frequently made from amongst the full bloods. Provided the latter have been lifted to an equally civilized plane, these unions are for the benefit of both sides.[88]

In the Northern Territory, Cecil Cook was furious about the imposition of Bleakley's ideas upon his domain: 'the publication of this report is to be deplored.'[89] In 1929, Cook wrote two reports condemning the Queensland model and arguing that it did not fit the

[85] J. W. Bleakley, *The Aboriginals and Half-Castes of Central Australia and North Australia, Report, 1928*, Parliamentary Paper (Australia), number 21 of 1929, p 35

[86] *Aboriginal Welfare*, p 6

[87] Bleakley, *The Aboriginals and Half-Castes of Central Australia ad North Australia*, p 17

[88] Bleakley, *The Aboriginals and Half-Castes of Central Australia ad North Australia*, p 28

[89] Cook to Government Resident R. H. Weddell, 11 June 1929, National Archives of Australia, 1946/3026, p 5

conditions found in most of far northern Australia, declaring the Queensland policy 'utterly impracticable and wholly undesirable in the Territory'.

> Whereas in Queensland and the greater part of Western Australia the Chief Protector is concerned in caring for the occasional Aboriginal in a country wholly under White Civilization, in the Territory and in the Kimberley district of Western Australia the process is one of regulating inter-racial relationships in a country where the native remains predominant and the White is an occasional settler.[90]

Despite his denunciations, Cook proved unable to change Commonwealth government thinking (as I discuss in more detail below). He was eventually forced to concede that the Bleakley Report and the Queensland model prevailed. At the 1937 conference, Cook grudgingly acknowledged that his objections had not altered the political reality. 'There is no essential difference,' he said, 'between the policy of the Commonwealth and that detailed by Mr Bleakley.'[91]

Bleakley was determined to advance a policy of 'segregation from alien influences', that is, separate development by means of shoring up and expanding the reserves and by preserving Aboriginal culture. His recommendations extended to the establishment of 'tribal courts', even for cases of murder of Aborigines by Aborigines.

> It is plainly unjust that an aboriginal, for a tribal murder, for instance, should be tried by the white man's laws and before a Court which cannot appreciate the peculiar tribal code influencing his actions.[92]

The only assimilation of full-bloods he envisaged was the very gradual introduction of modern customs through their employment on the huge cattle stations in western Queensland, the Northern Territory and the Kimberley where Aborigines had been employed since the late nineteenth century. He had little interest in the faster variety of assimilation through school and vocational education favoured by Neville and Cook.[93] For Bleakley, this was a matter of great principle. He told the 1937 conference:

[90] Cecil Cook, 'A Suggested Policy for Better Aboriginal Protection', Department of Health, North Australia Administration, 1 March 1929, National Archives of Australia, 1946/3026, p 23

[91] *Aboriginal Welfare*, p 14

[92] Bleakley, *The Aboriginals and Half-Castes of Central Australia ad North Australia*, p 39

[93] Rowley, *Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, pp 247, 260–70

> It is essential, first of all, to realize that we have no right to attempt to destroy their national life. Like ourselves, they are entitled to retain their racial entity and racial pride.[94]

Although Neville did persuade his government to give him greater powers, it was Bleakley's model of separate development that informed the major assumptions of the 1935 Moseley Report in Western Australia, which in turn informed the state's 1936 Native Administration Act that governed Neville's administration.[95] In particular, the 1936 Act disregarded Neville's wishes and followed Bleakley's recommendations that half-caste people should be permitted to marry those of full blood.[96] Moreover, Bleakley's model was still the one that prevailed in both Queensland and the Northern Territory after the 1937 conference.

In short, for most of the first half of the twentieth century, throughout northern Australia where the great majority of Aboriginal people remained of full descent, the *dominant* policy was *not* to make the Aboriginal race disappear by breeding out the colour. It was precisely the opposite. The three governments responsible for Queensland, the Northern Territory and the north of Western Australia passed laws and wrote regulations to segregate the great majority of Aborigines under their jurisdiction and protect them from that very fate.

Although the Canberra conference passed its resolution in favour of the 'ultimate absorption' of Aboriginal people, except for full-bloods, Neville's and Cook's assimilation program of the mid-1930s failed to change the direction of an otherwise long-entrenched policy regime that persisted across northern Australia from 1910 until World War II. That policy only came to an end in 1942 when the Australian Army abruptly arrived in the north to defend the country from the Japanese. The army changed everything. It recruited and trained large numbers of Aborigines, full-blood and half-caste, offering them wages and conditions until then undreamed of. In the major industrial centres, the war economy wanted all the labour it could get, including that of Aboriginal people. 'The effects of the war, which drew Aborigines, irrespective of their degrees of descent, into industrial employment and into the cities,' Rowley wrote, 'probably made the kind of pro-

[94] *Aboriginal Welfare*, p 18

[95] C. D. Rowley, *The Remote Aborigines: Aboriginal Policy and Practice, Volume III*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1970, p 249

[96] See footnotes 18 and 19 above in this chapter where I argue that this has not been recognized by earlier historians, especially Peter Biskup and Anna Haebich, and that the Act defined both full-blood and half-caste people as 'natives'.

gram which had been envisaged in absorption of the half-caste even more obviously irrelevant than ever to real situations.'[97]

Hence, rather than the most 'terrible moment' in Australian history, the 1937 conference of Aboriginal administrators was a combination of both idealism about the prospects for assimilation of those Aboriginal people on the fringes of white society and a conservative reaffirmation of established policy about the segregation of tribal Aborigines — in both territorial and sexual terms. Those who favoured assimilation had at their disposal neither the legislative authority nor the financial resources to implement any radical version of their plans. Indeed, the financial strictures of the time meant that none of the delegates had the resources to implement anything new at all. Their resolutions were more about hopes than actions.

This is not just my reading of the conference. In his 1972 book, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, the Western Australian historian Peter Biskup emphasized the gap between its ideals and what it actually achieved. Quoting, first, an unnamed observer and then a book by Paul Hasluck, Biskup wrote:

> For those who expected quick and tangible results, the meeting was a disappointment. 'One might reasonably infer', said an observer in 1939, 'that the Conference felt no particular urgencies were involved ... It is significant, too, that the Conference concerned itself almost entirely with highly general questions of policy, and postponed for a year such matters as control and prevention of disease, diet, working conditions, the fixation of a minimum aboriginal working wage, and several other matters of primary importance'. The postponed consultations never took place, so that 'any action that may have followed the conference was so slight as to bear little relation to its decisions'.[98]

In short, the conference was largely ineffectual. The claim that it was Australian history's most terrible moment is histrionic melodrama.

THE MYTH OF EUGENICS IN ABORIGINAL POLICY

> The eugenics program of constructive miscegenation, of breeding out the colour of the half-castes, might have represented a mere footnote in the history of Australian ideas were it not for the fact that in the late 1920s and early 1930s two of the three most important administrators in Aboriginal affairs, the Protectors in the Northern Territory and Western Australia, Dr Cecil Cook and A. O. Neville, were enthusiastic converts to

[97] Charles Rowley, *Outcasts in White Australia: Aboriginal Policy and Practice, Volume II*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1971, p 37; Rowley, *Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, pp 332–40

[98] Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, p 195, quoting from J. C. G. Kevin, ed., *Some Australians Take Stock*, London, 1939, p 24, and Paul Hasluck, *Native Welfare in Australia*, Perth, 1953, p 10

> this cause, and that both devoted part of their energies to the creation of a blueprint for the implementation of a policy for the breeding out of the mixed descent population under their control.
>
> — Robert Manne, 'The Stolen Generations', 1998 [99]

The discussion about eugenics and assimilation in the debate over 'breeding out the colour' is a good example of the low standards that prevail in the history of ideas in this country. The problem is not confined to the particular notions of the 1930s but has long characterised historical discussion of ideas and theories that had anything to do with race. In my 2004 book *The White Australia Policy*, I devoted two chapters to examining those historians who claim the theory of Social Darwinism was a major force in late nineteenth-century Australian ideas about race. These historians, all long-time teachers in our universities, had only the most tenuous grip on the content and influence of the ideas they paraded so confidently. They applied the Social Darwinist label indiscriminately to almost any negative opinion about non-white races they found. In reality, however, nineteenth-century Australia housed very few people, apart from a handful of radical intellectuals, who had even heard of Social Darwinism.[100]

The historians who have linked the policies of assimilation and 'breeding out the colour' to the theory of eugenics — a long list headed by Robert Manne, Henry Reynolds, Russell McGregor and Anna Haebich — have committed the same offences yet again.[101] For eugenics is a doctrine that is actually *opposed* to the kind of biological absorption proposed by A. O. Neville and Cecil Cook.

Eugenics was a nineteenth-century theory that sought to improve the racial stock of human beings through scientifically controlled,

[99] Manne, 'The Stolen Generations', p 58

[100] Keith Windschuttle, *The White Australia Policy*, Macleay Press, Sydney, 2004, Chapters Three and Five. The main offenders have been Henry Reynolds, Andrew Markus, Richard Broome, A. T. Yarwood, M. J. Knowling and Richard White.

[101] As well as Manne in 'The Stolen Generations', see also Manne, *In Denial*, p 39; Russell McGregor, *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory 1880-1939*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1997, pp 161–2; Reynolds, *Nowhere People*, Chapter Three; Henry Reynolds interview in Tom Zubrycki film *Stolen Generations*, Jotz Productions, 2000; Anna Haebich, 'Clearing the Wheat Belt', pp 283–5; Tony Barta, 'Sorry, and not Sorry, in Australia: How the Apology to the Stolen Generations Buried a History of Genocide', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 10, 2, 2008, p 208; Two exceptions who largely get it right are Patricia Jacobs, 'Science and Veiled Assumptions: Miscegenation in WA, 1930–1937', *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, 2, 1986, pp 19–21; and Tony Austin, 'Cecil Cook, Scientific Thought, and Half-Castes', *Aboriginal History*, 14, 1, 1990, pp 106–20.

selective breeding. It was devised in 1883 by one of Charles Darwin's cousins, Francis Galton, and was partly inspired by Darwin's theory of evolution and its Social Darwinist offshoot. Instead of natural selection producing the evolution of human populations through trial and error over many generations, eugenicists wanted to speed up the process by conscious human selection, confining breeding to the 'fittest' members of the race and by preventing inferior beings from having offspring. It is now commonly identified with the policies of 'racial hygiene' introduced by Nazi Germany in the 1930s. These involved the sterilization and euthanasia of people deemed mentally and physically inferior and, through the Nuremburg laws of 1935, the prevention of sexual intercourse between 'Aryans' and Jews.[102] The reason academic authors today want to insist that Neville and Cook were eugenicists is, plainly, to taint them with the Nazi connection.

However, other countries in the 1920s and 1930s were also motivated by the theory. It became policy in both Sweden and the United States. Several American states passed eugenics-inspired laws permitting the sterilization of people with mental and physical disabilities and prohibiting marriage to anyone who was 'epileptic, imbecile or feeble-minded'.[103] Eugenicists also influenced the US Immigration Act of 1924 to control the number of 'unfit' individuals entering the country. This act strengthened existing laws against miscegenation and inter-racial marriage.[104]

Today, academic commentators invariably fail to mention that the greatest enthusiasts for eugenics in the early twentieth century were active in socialist politics.[105] Rather than accept the outcomes of *laissez-faire* population growth, socialists wanted the state to plan and

[102] Robert Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine Under the Nazis*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 1988; Dieter Kuntz, ed., *Deadly Medicine: Creating the Master Race*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, 2004

[103] Mark Haller, *Eugenics: Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 1963; Daniel Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity*, Knopf, New York, 1985

[104] Paul Lombardo, 'Eugenics Laws Restricting Immigration', Eugenics Archive, http://www.eugenicsarchive.org/html/eugenics/essay9text.html; Paul Lombardo, 'Eugenic Laws Against Race-Mixing', Eugenics Archive, http://www.eugenicsarchive.org/html/eugenics/essay7text.html

[105] A conference at the University of Newcastle in 2000 which attracted 36 papers from historians around Australia on various aspects of eugenics, Darwinism and social thought in Australia, did not once mention the fact that in the first half of the twentieth century the leading Australian supporters of eugenics were socialists. See Martin Crotty, John Germov and Grant Rodwell, eds., *A Race for a Place: Eugenics, Darwinism and Social Thought and Practice in Australia*, University of Newcastle, Newcastle, 2000

control breeding. In England, the evolutionary biologist and socialist Karl Pearson advocated a national program to increase intelligence. He wanted to manage marriage in order to prevent those of low intelligence among the working classes from breeding.[106] The English sexual psychologist and social reformer, Havelock Ellis, argued that eugenics not only complemented but was necessary to achieve the socialist objective.[107] In Australia, Ellis's writings were a major influence on the Victorian Socialist Party. Its secretary in the 1910s and 1920s, Bob Ross, was an enthusiast for both Ellis and the English art critic John Ruskin who also supported the maintenance of racial purity.[108] Eugenics, then, was a theory of how racially superior persons should be permitted by the state to have children, while those designated inferior would be permitted to have none.[109]

All this is a long way from what Neville and Cook proposed to the Canberra conference in 1937. They were arguing for the biological absorption of Aborigines — a people regarded by almost all proponents of eugenics as inferior — into the white population though intermarriage. In contrast, legislatures in the United States strengthened eugenics-inspired laws by *prohibiting* marriage between black and white. Neville and Cook wanted part-Aborigines to inter-marry with Europeans not on the eugenics grounds of improving the quality of the racial stock or eliminating the 'unfit' but because assimilation was both possible and desirable in western and northern Australia on demographic and political grounds. They thought mixed marriages would promote progress in northern Australia and prevent political dissension by ensuring equal citizenship for its inhabitants.

Tellingly, neither Neville nor Cook ever described themselves as advocates of eugenics. This was not because they were trying to cover up their views because of the affinity between eugenics and Nazism. Since eugenics was also associated with apparently progressive opinion in the United States and Scandinavia, there would have been no shame at the time in openly identifying oneself with the concept, and no good reason to be a closet eugenicist. Indeed, in declaring themselves in favour of racial inter-marriage and biological absorption, both Neville and Cook could hardly have been unaware they were actually opposing international eugenicist opinion, which was strongly opposed to miscegenation. The only suggestion either of the two made that the mixing of Aboriginal and European genes might improve the racial stock was when Cook said the Aboriginal inherit-

[106] Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West*, Woodrow Wilson Center Press, Washington, 1996, pp 330–1
[107] Havelock Ellis, *The Task of Social Hygiene*, Constable, London, 1912
[108] Windschuttle, *White Australia Policy*, pp 133–41
[109] Hannaford, *Race*, pp 361

ance might overcome some of the problems white people found in the tropics, such as their high incidence of skin cancer. But the idea that 'dark blood' might improve the white race ran directly counter to the racist views of eugenicists who regarded anything less than white as inferior. When Robert Manne calls Dr Cook 'a thorough-going eugenicist'[110] all he does is demonstrate his own ignorance of what eugenics meant and what eugenicists wanted.

Rather than Darwinian theory, the views of Neville and Cook were more influenced by the newer field of Mendelian genetics. In the early twentieth century a new generation of academic biologists developed genetic theory by rediscovering the data and methodology of experiments with hybrid plants made in the 1860s by Austrian researcher, Gregor Mendel. They produced a far more accurate and productive account of inheritance than the 'survival of the fittest' race-based theory of Social Darwinism. There is no excuse for any academic commentator to be unaware of this. The principal author on Cecil Cook's thought, Tony Austin, wrote as long ago as 1990 that after he went to the Northern Territory in 1925, Cook kept abreast of the research literature on race mixing.

> His work in the North coincided with a period of growing scientific attack on eugenic assumptions about the adverse biological effects of race mixture. This is evident in the policies he pursued.[111]

Also in 1990, Neville's biographer, Pat Jacobs, analysed the Mendelian basis of his theories. She pointed out that this version of population genetics was a movement away from the scientific racism that had emerged in the nineteenth century and which had once provided the principal rationale for objections to miscegenation.[112] Jacobs also identified precisely where Neville had got these ideas from. As noted earlier, he had read them in his copy of Herbert Basedow's 1925 book, *The Australian Aborigine*, which had persuaded him that Europeans and Aborigines were biologically separated by nothing more than their climate-influenced skin colours.[113]

Neither Neville nor Cook were biological scientists. Cook was a qualified medical practitioner, but Neville's education in England had not gone beyond village school level.[114] Their ideas were anything but academically rigorous or scientifically consistent. Cook combined his belief about the possibility of 'breeding out the colour' with a non-biological theory of cultural evolution. He subscribed to the

[110] Manne, 'The Stolen Generations', p 58
[111] Austin, 'Cecil Cook', pp 112–13
[112] Jacobs, *Mister Neville*, p 255
[113] cited by Jacobs, *Mister Neville*, p 194
[114] Jacobs, *Mister Neville*, p 20

attitude towards indigenous people developed by the eighteenth-century Scottish Enlightenment which held their primitiveness was the product of their environment, rather than their race. He sometimes thought if officials like himself could transform the environment, they would transform Aborigines into a more advanced people.[115] At other times, Cook indicated he even had a problem with the theory of evolution itself. At a conference in 1930 he urged pastoralists and missionaries to foster the evolution of the half-caste Aborigine into a white man.

> Is there one of you who will dispute the necessity to give [the] Half-caste the opportunity to evolve into a white man? ... It is absolutely essential that he should be given an opportunity of evolving more or less into a white man.[116]

Russell McGregor, who reports this speech, describes it as a 'social Darwinist conception' but it actually demonstrates how distant Cook was from any coherent Darwinian theory of evolution — which is driven by natural selection rather than conscious agency — and how easily Cook misunderstood the terminology he often used.

It should also have been clear from their repudiation of atavism that the label of eugenicist did not fit either Cook of Neville. Atavism was the notion that miscegenation might produce 'throwbacks', that is, black or other racially different babies suddenly being born to ostensibly white couples in later generations. Atavism was a concept that arose in biology before the emergence of modern genetics, and was used by some Social Darwinists to argue against racially mixed marriages. However in Australia, both Neville and Cook rejected the notion. Cook argued that Europeans and Aborigines would produce no 'atavistic tendency' of the kind popularly predicted when Asians or negroes married whites.[117] Neville thought the same. 'There is no such thing as atavism in the aboriginal,' he told the 1937 conference.[118] The likely absence of atavism generated the pair's confidence about their programs for inter-racial marriage.

As I noted earlier, Henry Reynolds in *Nowhere People* calls Cook's views on inter-marriage 'quite progressive'. Yet, strangely, Reynolds's book contains early chapters on both eugenics and miscegenation which give a quick tour through the international literature on the subject, especially the American contributions. But when Reynolds tries to apply this thinking to Australia in later chapters, his own anal-

[115] McGregor, *Imagined Destinies*, p 181
[116] McGregor, 'Breed out the Colour', p 301
[117] Austin, 'Cecil Cook', p 115; Cook interview with Ernestine Hill, 1933, reproduced in MacDonald, ed., *Between Two Worlds*, p 25
[118] *Aboriginal Welfare*, p 10

ysis of Cook and other administrators demonstrated how little these theories influenced official policy in this country. In other words, Reynolds could not resist the temptation to taint Australian officials with the stigma of eugenics and its Nazi associations, even though his own research showed the label did not stick.

Rather than admit the term had little applicability in Australia, many left-wing historians today prefer to define it so broadly that any discussion in the past about race is automatically labelled eugenicist. The editors of the papers from an academic conference in 2000 at the University of Newcastle, who unexpectedly found some of their speakers questioning the link between eugenics and Aboriginal absorption, still tried to rescue the concept in their introduction:

> Eugenics theory never received widespread endorsement from the scientific community or from wider society ... Yet it cannot be denied that the 'eugenic imperative' — broadly speaking, the desire to improve the racial composition of Australia, whether based strictly on eugenic theory or not — has touched many areas of Australian life.[119]

In other words, ideas that fit the political obsessions of today's academic community have a life of their own, no matter what.

One of the few Australian academic authors to properly identify this issue has been the anthropologist and archaeologist Josephine Flood. In her recent book, *The Original Australians*, she dismissed the notion that the kind of assimilation proposed by Cook and Neville was comparable to Nazi policies based on race. Flood wrote:

> Racism is discrimination on the basis of perceived genetic superiority so racists do *not* promote assimilation since inferior genes of the minority group might pollute superior genes of the 'master race'. Thus to keep the Aryan race pure, Hitler determined to exterminate, *not* assimilate, Europe's Jews. Second, Australia's assimilation policy assumed cultural, not biological, superiority. It was not so much racist as ethnocentric and paternalistic — its authors believed their own culture was superior.[120]

Surprisingly, even the Human Rights Commission report *Bringing Them Home*, which gave the imprimatur of its authority to almost every other fanciful allegation about stolen children, baulked at labelling this theory a version of eugenics. Whoever on the Commission wrote the following passage about A. O. Neville was obviously paraphrasing from Pat Jacobs's biography.

[119] Martin Crotty, John Germov and Grant Rodwell, eds, 'Introduction' to *A Race for a Place*, p 1

[120] Josephine Flood, *The Original Australians: Story of the Aboriginal People*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2006, p 225 (her emphases)

> His model was a biological one of 'absorption' or 'assimilation' argued in the language of genetics. Unlike the ideology of racial purity that emerged in Germany from eugenics, according to which 'impure races' had to be prevented from 'contaminating' the pure Aryan race, Neville argued the advantages of 'miscegenation' between Aboriginal and white people.[121]

In short, the assimilation proposed by Neville and Cook in 1937 cannot be described as eugenicist, no matter how pliable academic historians today claim the term to be. The concept of taking people of part-Aboriginal descent in the Northern Territory and Western Australia and assimilating them by marriage and miscegenation was something different altogether. At the same time in those parts of continental Europe where eugenicist theories really did prevail, the Australian theory would have been held in contempt.

GOVERNMENT POLICY VERSUS BUREAUCRATIC OPINION

> It can be stated definitely, that it is and always has been, contrary to policy to force half-caste women to marry anyone. The half-caste must be a perfectly free agent in the matter.
>
> — J. A. Perkins, Minister for the Interior, House of Representatives, Canberra, 1934[122]

The questions of what actually constitutes a government policy, and who is responsible for making it so, are important ones in this debate. Proponents of the genocide thesis are forced to admit that no Australian government ever enacted into law anything called, or indeed even resembling, 'breeding out the colour'. Some academic historians can admit this yet, in the very next breath, insist that genocide was still the intended policy outcome. Anna Haebich argues of Western Australia:

> Most importantly, while the government did not officially adopt the policy of biological absorption, the 1936 Act nevertheless gave Neville the necessary powers for its implementation. This threatened the southern Aborigines' very existence as a distinct racial and ethnic community.[123]

Their case is usually supported by the claim that it was public servants, acting behind closed doors and pushing their own agenda, who were to blame. Russell McGregor argues:

> Indisputably, in my view, 'breeding out the colour' was policy, in that it was a systematic course of action endorsed and pursued by those charged with authority over Aboriginal affairs. However, it was policy initiated

[121] *Bringing Them Home*, p 108
[122] *Hansard*, House of Representatives, 2 August 1934
[123] Haebich, *For Their Own Good*, p 349

> not by parliament or minister but by senior members of the bureaucracy.[124]

In 1999, the editor of *Quadrant* magazine, Paddy McGuinness, made the definition of policy one of the issues in this debate. Until then, academic historians of Aboriginal history had defined almost any prejudicial statement by anyone employed by government as policy. Mc Guinness argued:

> It is however simply not enough to adduce what we would now think of as racist remarks and analyses by state civil servants responsible for Aboriginal Affairs as evidence of what government policies actually were ... A little bit of historical research more profound than the location and citation out of context of embarrassing quotes is necessary.[125]

The concept of a 'policy', McGuinness insisted, could not refer to simply anything that anyone in government said or did. Sometimes public servants adopted practices that had never been endorsed by their political superiors. Sometimes they acted contrary to authority or even corruptly. He gave an example of a public servant whose views were at odds with the government he was advising: 'It would be like quoting the views of [conservative economist] Fred Wheeler, Secretary to the Treasury under the Whitlam government, on economic policy as evidence for that government's policies.'

Indeed, this would seem to be self-evident. At most, a policy would be a decision taken by government at ministerial level, and enforced by legislation or regulation. At the very least, a policy would be a long-standing, widely accepted administrative practice that never aroused any serious objections. To be put into practice, policies involve the allocation of funds and personnel.

Anyone with even the briefest experience of government policy-making invariably finds that, on most issues, both politicians and public servants span a range of differing opinion. To select a handful of individual statements from any single point in such a spectrum and present them as the voice of all concerned is to seriously misrepresent any policy debate and its ultimate outcome. Yet McGuinness argued that this was what academic historians had done on the question of breeding out the colour. He wrote:

> Were there racists amongst the white policy-makers in Aboriginal affairs? Undoubtedly there were. But did they dominate the formulation of policy everywhere and anywhere in the states and territories? Did some bureaucrats in areas of policy-making advocate the steady disappearance of Aborigines by assimilation of mixed-bloods and the inevitable disappear-

[124] McGregor, 'Breed out the Colour', p 288

[125] P. P. McGuinness, 'Poor Fella My "Stolen Generation" ', *Quadrant*, November 1999, p 3

> ance of full-blooded Aborigines attached to their own culture and way of life? Yes, there is clear evidence of that. But was this the basis for policy in any specific state or territory, or was the picture a lot more complicated? Is there any government policy statement, or internal policy document, as distinct from views expressed by individual bureaucrats however senior, to this effect? No-one has found one.[126]

One of the writers McGuinness was targeting with these observations was the Melbourne political commentator and his predecessor as *Quadrant* editor, Robert Manne. In several articles in the magazine and the press about the Stolen Generations, Manne had committed the offence that McGuinness charged. Manne had taken individual statements out of context and presented them as the 'policy' of the government.

In 2001, however, Manne responded to this accusation with apparently new evidence. He claimed to have found the smoking gun in the charge, an archived document that demonstrated the Commonwealth government really did support the policy of breeding out the colour. He said it was a response by the Secretary of the Commonwealth Department of the Interior to a memorandum in February 1933. Earlier in this chapter, I quoted a passage from this memorandum by Dr Cecil Cook entitled 'Permission to Marry Aboriginals'. In it, Cook urged the Commonwealth 'to breed out the colour by elevating female half-castes to white standard with a view to their absorption by mating into the white population.' This subsequently, Manne said, became official Commonwealth policy:

> The officials in Canberra and their Minister, J. A. Perkins, gave support to Cook's proposal for an extension of the Territory policy to Australia as a whole. The Secretary in the Department of the Interior, J. A. Carrodus, composed a memorandum of his own. 'The policy of mating half-castes with whites, for the purpose of breeding out the colour, is that adopted by the Commonwealth government on the recommendation of Dr Cook'.[127]

Manne went on to say that the Department of the Prime Minister recommended the question of 'an all-Australia policy' on breeding out the colour be placed on the agenda of the next Premiers' Conference. Somehow the item was left off the agenda, probably, Manne said, because of objections by the Queensland Protector, J. W. Bleakley, so it never actually became national policy. Nonetheless, Manne felt the Carrodus document still vindicated his position.

> McGuinness's contention that the policy of 'breeding out the colour' was never 'the basis for policy in any specific State or Territory', and his pro-

[126] McGuinness, 'Poor Fella My "Stolen Generation" ', p 2
[127] Manne, *In Denial*, pp 64–5

nouncement that 'no-one' had ever found a 'government policy or even an internal policy document' to show that it was, are both completely wrong.[128]

Manne gave an archival reference for the Carrodus memorandum. It is part of a file held by the National Archives, which contains a number of documents mostly from 1932 to 1934 about 'mixed marriages' and 'breeding out the colour'.[129] The file, which is now available online, contains 107 pages of documents. There is much more in it than Manne let on. It is also quite apparent that the superficial research done by the Human Rights Commission meant the authors of *Bringing Them Home* never set eyes on it. The file reveals that what was described as the policy of 'the Commonwealth Government' by departmental officer Carrodus — who Manne misrepresented as the department's Secretary — was no more than a local policy of the Northern Territory where Cecil Cook, without any higher authority, was making his own interpretation of regulations that allowed him to approve or disapprove the marriages of part-Aboriginal people. Indeed, in reproducing the brief quotation from Carrodus in the way he did, Manne compounded the offence of which McGuinness originally accused him, that of citing apparently embarrassing quotes out of context.[130] Let me now provide the context, which in this case is both rich in detail and candid in its revelations about attitudes among Australian politicians and public servants at the time.

The first thing to note in this debate is that, under the Australian Constitution of 1901, responsibility for Aboriginal affairs was specifically left to the states. Until the 1967 referendum changed the Constitution, the only places where the Australian federal government could pass laws about Aborigines was in the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory. The federal government had taken over responsibility for the Northern Territory when South Australia relinquished control in 1911. Hence the federal government did not have the power to undertake Cook's recommendation to extend Territory practice to Australia as a whole, even if it wanted to. It

[128] Manne, *In Denial*, p 65

[129] National Archives of Australia, Commonwealth Records Series, Department of the Interior file A659/1, 1940/1/408

[130] In fact, it is difficult to believe that Manne has ever read the complete file and more likely that he gained the reference second-hand. Had he read the original file, he would have seen it contained numerous documents signed by H. C. Brown, the actual Secretary of the Department of the Interior at the time, and he would not have made the mistake of attributing that position to J. A. Carrodus. In 1933, Carrodus was no more than the officer in the department who drafted the particular interdepartmental memo that Manne cited. He did not become Secretary until November 1935.

could only do this if it could persuade all states to change their own policies in accord. As Cook knew from his clashes with Bleakley in 1928 and 1929, that was not going to happen in Queensland.

In the Northern Territory, the legal instrument under which the federal government controlled Aboriginal marriage was Section 45 of the *Aboriginals Ordinance 1918–1930.* This ordinance followed Queensland practice and prohibited the marriage of full-blood Aborigines to anyone not a full-blood Aborigine, unless the Chief Protector agreed. But as the department insisted, in the case of full-blooded Aborigines he never did agree:

> Permission is never granted for white persons to marry aboriginals. Permission is also refused for coloured persons, including Asiatics, to marry aboriginals.[131]

Cook's only area of discretion was to allow or disallow the marriage of half-castes. His practice was to permit the marriage of half-castes to other half-castes and to whites, but to prohibit the marriage of half-castes to Asians and other 'coloured' people. His attempts to breed out the colour were confined to attempts to encourage young female half-castes to marry white men.[132]

In 1932 and early 1933, Cook sent a series of letters and reports via the Northern Territory Administrator to the Department of the Interior in Canberra trying to get his marriage practices formally endorsed by the federal government, hopefully by an amendment to the *Aboriginals Ordinance.* His argument was that other protectors, Bleakley in particular, were trying to dissuade half-caste and quarter-caste Aborigines from marrying whites but at the same time were encouraging them to marry Asians and Melanesians. Cook wrote: 'mating with Japanese, South-Sea Islanders, Chinese and hybrid coloured aliens has been regarded as a very desirable solution to what was the marriage problem of coloured girls some of whom had over seventy-five per cent of white blood'.

In a rehearsal of arguments he was subsequently to repeat many times over the following years, Cook said the offspring of the latter unions were creating economic and social problems for the whole of northern Australia. These half-castes, who fitted into neither white nor Aboriginal society, were growing into a disaffected, alienated

[131] Memorandum: Intermarriage of Coloured and Foreign Races with Aboriginals, Department of the Interior, 25 May 1933, file A659/1, 1940/1/408, p 94. In this memo, the term 'aboriginals' came under the subheading 'Full-blooded aboriginals' and referred only to them.

[132] Memorandum: Intermarriage of Coloured and Foreign Races with Aboriginals, Department of the Interior, 25 May 1933, file A659/1, 1940/1/408, p 94

group with no vocational skills and high unemployment rates. They could become prey to outside political agitators, particularly Communists. 'Their multiplication throughout the north of the continent is likely to be attended by very grave consequences to Australia as a nation.' Cook said his solution was to absorb half-castes into the white population through marriage: 'Every effort is being made to breed-out colour by elevating female half-castes to white standard with a view to their absorption by mating into the white population.'[133]

Initially, Cook's reports had some success. In February 1933, the Secretary of the Department of the Interior, Herbert Brown, took the matter to his minister, John Arthur Perkins. Aboriginal affairs, Perkins recognized, was primarily a state government responsibility and the states 'will have their own views on the matter'. So Perkins recommended to the Prime Minister's Department that it list the issue for discussion at the next Premiers' Conference scheduled for June 1933.[134]

By the time the conference began, however, a number of reports were appearing in both Australian and English newspapers suggesting that something untoward was going on. The report that caused the most dramatic response was published in the London newspaper, the *Daily Herald*. A story attributed to a correspondent in Brisbane, based on an interview with Queensland Protector, J. W. Bleakley, informed English readers that the Australian government was giving cash handouts to entice white men to marry half-caste women. On 8 June 1933 the newspaper wrote:

> BONUS OFFERED FOR MARRYING HALF-CASTES
> Australia's plan to breed out the black strain
> From Our Correspondent, Brisbane, Wednesday
>
> Following the "Daily Herald's" exposures of certain aspects of the Australian colour problem, the Commonwealth Government is to give cash bonuses to men who marry half-caste women.
>
> This effort to breed out the black strain from the children of marriages between aborigines and whites has caused serious conflict among the authorities...
>
> In acting on the report of the medical officer for North Australia (Mr Cecil Cook), the Canberra authorities are in direct conflict with Mr Bleakley, Queensland's special protector of aborigines and the leading authority on the subject.

[133] Cook to Weddell, 7 February 1933, file A659/1, 1940/1/408, p 105

[134] Internal memorandum, Department of Interior, 22–23 February 1933, and Memorandum from Interior to Prime Minister's Department, 27 February 1933, file A659/1, 1940/1/408, pp 102, 103

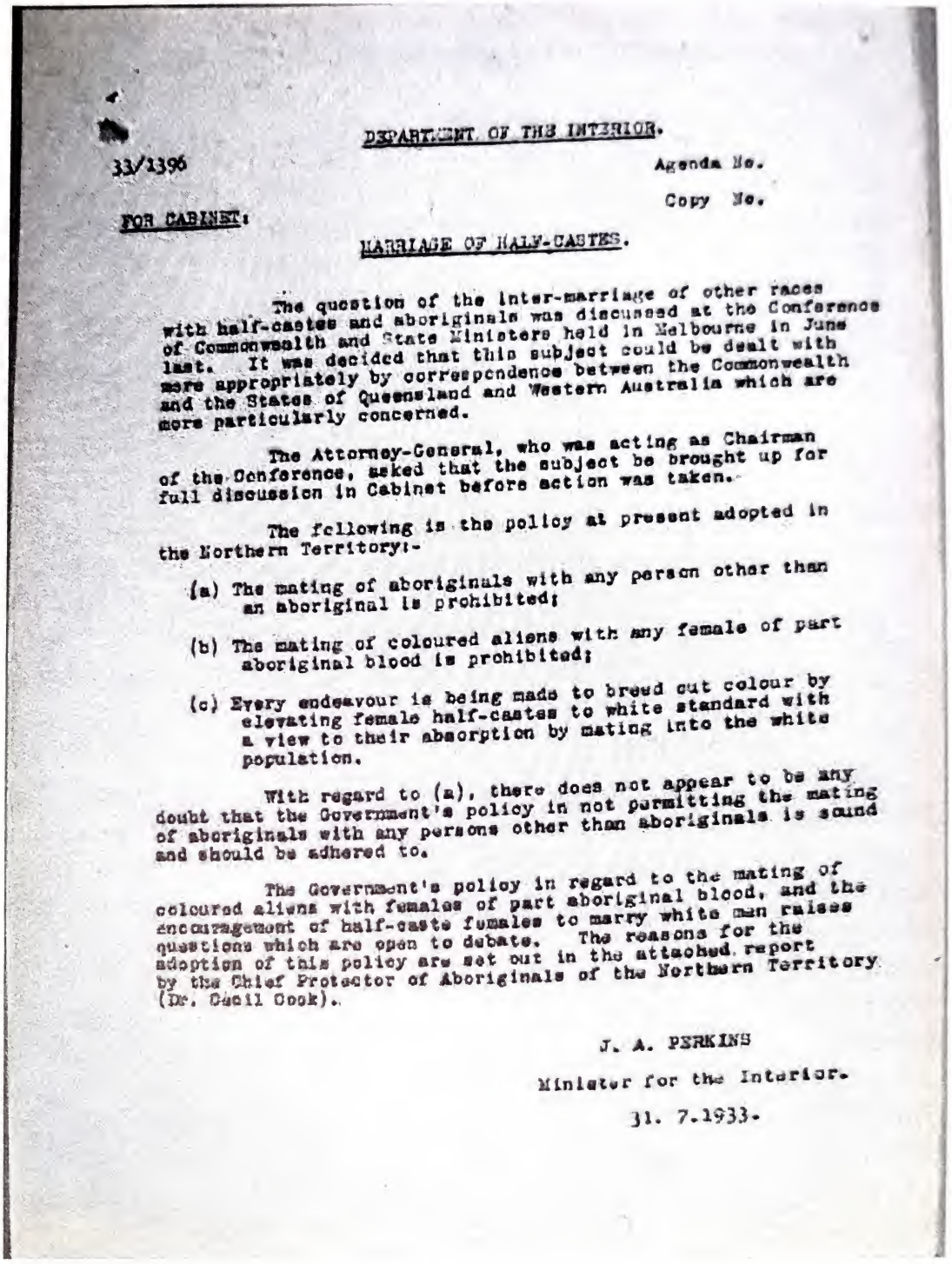
> In an exclusive interview with me, Mr Bleakley opposed the intermarriage of whites and half-castes...
>
> The only solution of the half-caste problem, he said, was the encouragement of white women to settle in the tropics, and having married men only supervising aboriginal employment.
>
> Home Secretary Hanlon told me that he strongly disapproved the Commonwealth action, and said Queensland would continue to not grant permission for white and black marriages, except in unusual circumstances.[135]

The report caused consternation in Canberra after Australia's London-based Minister Without Portfolio, Stanley Melbourne Bruce, cabled Prime Minister Joseph Lyons asking for an urgent statement of the position in order to mollify the British press.[136] The next day, Lyons cabled back:

> Statement published is absolutely incorrect and completely without foundation. Question of payment of bonuses to white men has not been raised or suggested in any quarter in Australia so far as known to the Government. It would not be entertained by the Government. The report so far as it relates to the Commonwealth Government appears to be a deliberate invention.
> LYONS[137]

Tellingly, the archived file that contains this cable also contains the draft version of the response suggested by the Department of the Interior. Written by departmental officer J. A. Carrodus for his superior, the department's Secretary, the draft telegram included the following sentences as part of its denial: 'Policy of Commonwealth is to encourage marriage of half-caste women in Northern Territory to whites with view to breeding out colour Stop Such marriages are extremely rare.'[138] It would have been clear to everyone in Canberra at the time that when Carrodus said 'Policy of Commonwealth', he meant the policy of the Commonwealth in the Northern Territory, the only place where the Commonwealth actually administered Aboriginal affairs. The fact that Prime Minister Lyons omitted these two sentences, while accepting the rest of the department's wording of the denial, indicates that, whatever was going on in the Territory administration, Lyons himself did not want his Commonwealth Government associated with the practice.

[135] *Daily Herald*, London, 8 June 1933, clipping in file A659/1, 1940/1/408, p 62
[136] Bruce to Lyons, 8 June 1933, file A659/1, 1940/1/408, p 89
[137] Lyons to Bruce, 9 June 1933, file A659/1, 1940/1/408, p 85
[138] Carrodus to Prime Minister's Department, 9 June 1933, file A659/1, 1940/1/408, p 86



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR.

33/1396 Agenda No.

Copy No.

FOR CABINET:

MARRIAGE OF HALF-CASTES.

The question of the inter-marriage of other races with half-castes and aboriginals was discussed at the Conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers held in Melbourne in June last. It was decided that this subject could be dealt with more appropriately by correspondence between the Commonwealth and the States of Queensland and Western Australia which are more particularly concerned.

The Attorney-General, who was acting as Chairman of the Conference, asked that the subject be brought up for full discussion in Cabinet before action was taken.

The following is the policy at present adopted in the Northern Territory:-

(a) The mating of aboriginals with any person other than an aboriginal is prohibited;

(b) The mating of coloured aliens with any female of part aboriginal blood is prohibited;

(c) Every endeavour is being made to breed out colour by elevating female half-castes to white standard with a view to their absorption by mating into the white population.

With regard to (a), there does not appear to be any doubt that the Government's policy in not permitting the mating of aboriginals with any persons other than aboriginals is sound and should be adhered to.

The Government's policy in regard to the mating of coloured aliens with females of part aboriginal blood, and the encouragement of half-caste females to marry white men raises questions which are open to debate. The reasons for the adoption of this policy are set out in the attached report by the Chief Protector of Aboriginals of the Northern Territory (Dr. Cecil Cook).

J. A. PERKINS

Minister for the Interior.

31. 7.1933.

The 'breeding out the colour' submission that went to the Cabinet of the Lyons Government in September 1933. Cabinet declined to accept Dr Cecil Cook's proposals and sent the question back to the Department of the Interior whose head, Herbert Brown, advised his Minister: 'My own view is that half-castes who have been given certain rights and enjoy the franchise, should have the same privileges in respect to selecting their husbands or wives, as are enjoyed by other citizens of the Commonwealth.' The Minister for the Interior, John Perkins, agreed and in the House of Representatives he publicly denounced Cook's concept. In the 1930s, no one in this prolonged debate ever connected the proposal to the removal of children.

These events coincided with the Premiers' Conference in Melbourne from 9 to 14 June 1933. Indeed, the timing of Bleakley's intervention in the press via his interview with the *Daily Herald* journalist was most likely designed to influence the conference against Cook's proposal for a national agreement. The tactic worked. Rather than have all six state premiers decide the issue at the conference, they decided to leave it to the three administrations responsible for northern Australia: 'the subject could more appropriately be dealt with by correspondence between the Commonwealth and the States of Queensland and Western Australia which are more particularly concerned'. However, the issue remained alive at the national level after the Attorney-General in the Lyons government, John Latham, who was chairing the Premiers' Conference at the time, got the premiers' agreement to ask the Minister of the Interior to bring up the matter for a full discussion in federal Cabinet before any final decision was made.[139]

It is important to recognize that, in none of the documents under consideration here, was there any recommendation for the removal of children. The political discussion about breeding out the colour was an issue entirely confined to the marriage of half-castes to whites. The Cabinet submission on the policy prepared on 31 July 1933 by the Minister for the Interior, J. A. Perkins, referred to an accompanying report by Cook. That was a five-page document written on 27 June 1933, which rehashed most of the same arguments about marriage and absorption that Cook had been making since 1929. It made no suggestion at all for the removal of children.[140] In his submission to Cabinet, Perkins described the marriage practices Cook had adopted in the Northern Territory as follows:

(a) The mating of aboriginals with any person other than an aboriginal is prohibited;

(b) The mating of coloured aliens with any female of part aboriginal blood is prohibited;

(c) Every endeavour is being made to breed out colour by elevating female half-castes to white standards with a view to their absorption by mating into the white population.

Perkins said there was no doubt that Cook's policy (a) in prohibiting 'aboriginals' — by which he meant people of full descent — from mating with anyone not of full blood, 'is sound and should be

[139] Whiteford to Department of Interior, 15 June 1933, file A659/1, 1940/1/408, p 82

[140] Cook to Weddell, 27 June 1933, file A659/1, 1940/1/408, pp 49–53

adhered to'. However, he said Cook's policy (b) about the prohibition of 'coloured aliens' mating with half-caste Aborigines, and (c) the fostering of marriages between half-caste females and white men, were both issues 'open to debate'.[141]

Part of the pressure on Cabinet to consider the issue was a further round of criticism in the press. On 20 June 1933, several journalists contacted the Department of the Interior about reports from Darwin that half-caste women were being forced by Cook, against their wishes, to marry white men they had never seen. The Chief Protector had allegedly sent several young women to Katherine for this purpose.[142] One of the instigators of the story was Darwin journalist Fred Thompson, former editor of the *Northern Territory Times*, a persistent critic who had a low opinion of Cook. He thought Cook should resign rather than 'be permitted further to interfere with the individual liberty of any protégé of the taxpayers — no matter what colour their skin'.[143] In Canberra, Carrodus described the allegation about forced marriages as 'stupid and irresponsible'. The press in Darwin published his response:

> An officer of the Department said the Commonwealth Government had no power to make half-castes marry whites. The government prevented half-castes from marrying aborigines on racial grounds but no instructions had been given the Protector of Aborigines as suggested, because half-caste girls were perfectly free to decide for themselves. It is all a lot of rot, they declared.[144]

Cook himself advised the department that the story was a 'malicious falsehood without any foundation whatever'. It was a 'fabrication by certain employers intended [to] make girls suspicious of proposals of marriage thereby influencing girls against leaving employment'.[145]

While it may well have been 'a lot of rot' and a malicious falsehood that half-caste girls were being forced into marriage, it was not true that they were 'perfectly free to decide for themselves'. The Commonwealth Ordinances still gave Cook room to prevent them marrying someone of whom he and his theories disapproved. Nonetheless, as Carrodus's response to the press demonstrated, there was a fine line between what the regulations permitted Cook to do and what

[141] J. A. Perkins, Minister for the Interior, reference no. 33/1396, For Cabinet, Agenda No. 746, 'Marriage of Half-Castes', 31 July 1933, (discussed 19 September 1933), National Archives file A6006, 1933/09/19

[142] Carroll to Weddell, telegram and margin notes, 20 June 1933, file A659/1, 1940/1/408, p 81

[143] 'Marriageable Half-Caste Girls', *Northern Standard*, 23 June 1933

[144] 'Half-Caste Girls', *Northern Standard*, 23 June 1933

[145] Weddell to Department of Interior, 22 June 1933, file A659/1, 1940/1/408, p 79

Canberra thought was unacceptable. Within this distinction lurked obvious potential for the government to be politically embarrassed.

On 19 September 1933 the Lyons Cabinet considered the papers Perkins submitted. It did not endorse Cook's policy. Instead, the Cabinet minutes declared the matter: 'Deferred pending return of Mr Brown (Secy Interior) from NT'.[146] This meant the papers went back for further consideration by the Secretary of the Department of the Interior, Herbert Brown. Perkins added a pencilled note to the Cabinet paper to also refer the question to an upcoming conference of missionary societies at Melbourne in December.[147]

By the time Brown wrote his advice in response, he had decided that Cook's scheme was impractical to administer and objectionable in terms of the citizen rights of half-castes. He did not want Cook's practices to be given the status of law by any rewriting of the Commonwealth's Ordinances for the Territory. In November 1933, Brown wrote to his minister:

> With regard to your direction that I should see Dr Cook's report respecting the question of mating half-caste women with whites and give the question some consideration, I desire to inform you I have perused Dr Cook's report and whilst I am of the opinion that, theoretically, his suggestion would be quite good, in practice I think it would prove to be unsound.
>
> In any case, I fail to see how it would be practicable to provide the necessary legal machinery in order to give effect to Dr Cook's proposals.
>
> Whilst there are undoubtedly some instances of very satisfactory results from the mating of half-caste women with white husbands, it would, I think, be unwise to attempt to restrict the selection by half-caste women of husbands of their own choice and, moreover, it would, I think, be quite improper to limit by Ordinance the procedure to be adopted by half-caste women in respect of their selection of husbands, unless the machinery were to apply equally to half-caste men, and here I think, is where Dr Cook's proposals break down.
>
> My own view is that half-castes who have been given certain rights and enjoy the franchise, should have the same privileges in respect to selecting their husbands or wives, as are enjoyed by other citizens of the Commonwealth.[148]

Brown could also see problems for the government if the issue was given over to the missionaries who, throughout Australia at the time,

[146] Minutes of Cabinet meeting, Melbourne, 19 September 1933, agenda item 746, National Archives of Australia, CRA A3259/XM, Lyons Ministry, Minutes of Cabinet Meetings 1932–1934, Cabinet Minutes 23.1.33 – 12.12.33

[147] Notations on Cabinet submission by J. A. Perkins, 19 September 1933, National Archives file A6006, 1933/09/19

[148] Brown to Perkins, 3 November 1933, file A659/1, 1940/1/408, p 39

regarded the marriage of Aborigines as their own prerogative. He advised Perkins to decide the issue himself:

> Whilst it would appear from your pencil note on Cabinet submission that it was the Govt's intention to refer this question to the Missionary bodies, I am afraid that by so doing it will result in further difficulty and embarrassment to the Govt. The native spiritual affairs may be one for the Missionaries but the administration of native affairs is a matter for the Govt.[149]

This advice left Perkins either unmoved or unable to make up his mind. He simply wrote a note on the November memo 'Seen', and then, a few weeks later added: 'Present policy to continue.'[150] However, the issue proved too contentious to go away and, before long, the Labor Party Opposition began to generate publicity about it.

In early 1934, the Labor member for Melbourne Ports, Edward (Jack) Holloway, toured the Northern Territory where he encountered widespread derision of Cook and opposition to his scheme. He subsequently made a speech to the House of Representatives where he summarized what he had been told by government officials in Darwin, by railway personnel, wardens, troopers and other public officers.

> They assured me that socially and as a private citizen, Dr Cook was an estimable gentleman, but that, officially, he was an absolute crank, his pet scheme being to breed all the half-castes in the territory back to white people. They assured me that so determined was he to give effect to his theory that he was giving preference in employment to those whites who promised to marry half-caste women ... The people in the Northern Territory have told me that men who have come from the southern states looking for work as railway gangers or foreman have been forced to bow to his decision. They have married half-caste women but, in a number of cases, have subsequently deserted their new partners. Some I understand were already married men with wives living in the southern states, so the experiment being carried out by Dr Cook is not without its tragic side ... I wish it to be clearly understood that I am not charging the government with any responsibility for this unusual policy. But the fact that Mr Brown, the Secretary to the Department of the Interior, or someone else, stated that the department does not stand for this policy is not a contradiction of the statement that Dr Cook is carrying it out.[151]

[149] Brown to Perkins, 1 December 1933, file A659/1, 1940/1/408, p 35

[150] Notes added to Brown to Perkins, 3 November 1933, and initialed 'JAP', file A659/1, 1940/1/408, p 39. Perkins's second notation is dated '4.1.33', but this was obviously a mistake at the start of the new year, and he meant 4 January 1934.

[151] *Hansard*, House of Representatives, 28 June 1934

Holloway was a trade union identity whose formal schooling had ended at age thirteen. However, he had a better grasp of the logic implicit in Cook's scheme than its medically educated author.

> If there is any logic in the theory, it will be necessary to segregate all the half-castes and practise on them for eight or nine generations. Meantime, the cause of the problem having been left untouched, there will be three or four times the number of fresh half-castes coming along to complicate the position.

In a brief, initial response, Minister Perkins protested the lack of notice given him but acknowledged the force of Holloway's address, which 'heaped ridicule upon his [Cook's] work, and upon some of his ideas with regard to the treatment of half-castes'.[152] Over the subsequent six weeks, the press in the southern states took up the issue, reporting Holloway's speech and the rejoinders by Perkins and Cook himself.[153]

As Holloway noted, the immediate response by Brown, the Secretary of the department, had been to deny government approval for any such policy. After his officers had ascertained what was actually going on in Cook's administration, Perkins made a more considered reply to the House in August. He began by rejecting Holloway's central allegation. Cook could not have been involved in any preferential employment practices since he had no authority to make offers of jobs in the public service, in government contracts, or anywhere in the Territory's private sector. Hence Holloway's case 'falls to the ground'.

But then, at the same time as he praised Cook for being a 'conscientious, able and loyal officer', Perkins pulled the rug out from under his feet. Perkins abandoned his previous tacitly neutral stance on Cook's practices and publicly endorsed the position Brown had been urging on him since November: half-caste women should be free to marry who they chose. Perkins told the House:

> Reference was made in the honourable member's speech to the 'forcing' of white men to marry half-castes. This would presuppose that the same force was being used on half-caste women. It can be stated definitely, that it is and always has been, contrary to policy to force half-caste women to

[152] *Hansard*, House of Representatives, 28 June 1934

[153] 'White Men to Marry Half-Castes: Allegations by Labor Member', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 June 1934; 'Half-Caste Aliens in North "Grave Problem"', *Herald*, Melbourne, 29 June 1934; 'Forced Marriages. White Men and Half-Castes. Mr Holloway's Allegation Emphatically Denied', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 August 1934; 'White and Half-Caste Marriages', *Herald*, Melbourne, 7 August 1934

> marry anyone. The half-caste must be a perfectly free agent in the matter.[154]

In other words, Perkins decided to kill off the emerging public disquiet about Cook's scheme by withdrawing the Protector's discretion to approve or disapprove half-caste marriages. His declaration that 'the half-caste must be a perfectly free agent in the matter' left no room for doubt. This was a much stronger statement than any made before. It came not from a public servant trying to fob off the media but was a carefully prepared pronouncement by the Minister to the House about what his policy permitted. Cook had no option but to conform.

This decision arose from a combination of pressures: the public airing of the question in parliament and the press, the critique of Cook's scheme given to Perkins by Brown, and from a new focus on the issue within the Territory itself. In April 1934, one of the officers of the Department of the Interior most involved in drafting ministerial statements on Aboriginal affairs, J. A. Carrodus, became Acting Administrator of the Territory, a position he held until October that year. One of his major projects was a report on the governance, economy and development prospects of the Territory. The 58-page report devoted its longest discussion to the administration of Aboriginal welfare and justice regimes, and also addressed Cook's policy on half-castes.[155] In just two paragraphs, Carrodus dismissed the demographic assumptions behind Cook's plans for the marriage of half-caste women and declared the project to breed out the colour unworkable. This was largely due to the sexual preferences of the half-castes themselves. Rather than try to engineer a solution to the growing number of half-castes, Carrodus advised the Commonwealth to simply get used to it.

> There have been serious misgivings in recent years regarding the increase in the number of half-castes in the Territory. The general impression is that all the half-castes are the result of the mating of Europeans and non-natives with aboriginal women. That impression, however, is quite an erroneous one. The returns for the year ended 30th June, 1934, show that of the half-castes born during the year 13 per cent were from the mating of European with aboriginal women and 80% from the mating of half-caste males with half-caste women.
>
> In my opinion no great success will attend the scheme for the encouragement of the marriage of half-caste girls to whites. It will be found that half-castes will prefer to marry half-castes. The effort to breed out colour is a commendable one, but it would appear that the Government must

[154] *Hansard*, House of Representatives, 2 August 1934

[155] J. A. Carrodus, Report on the Northern Territory, 20 November 1934, National Archives file A1, 1934/10021, pp 21–37

face a large natural increase of the half-caste population from the mating of half-caste with half-caste.[156]

As I noted earlier, the statistics in the Carrodus report confirmed what Cook himself already knew. In 1933, Cook admitted to journalist Ernestine Hill that he was arranging no more than three or four such marriages a year — 'Some of them have been happy and satisfactory. Some have not.'[157] By 1937, he confessed to the Canberra conference that in the previous seven or eight years he had been only able to persuade 40 to 50 half-caste women to marry whites.[158] In short, breeding out the colour through arranged marriages was a project whose prospects were hopeless.

Let me summarize the policy conclusions from all of this:

First, in the Northern Territory from about 1930 to 1934, the Chief Protector Cecil Cook devised a 'policy' of his own, sanctioned neither by his superiors nor by local legislation, to breed out the colour by arranging marriages of half-caste women to white men. However, Cook's ambitions were frustrated because they were at odds with the preferences of half-caste women themselves. The number of his arranged marriages never amounted to more than a handful a year.

Second, the Commonwealth government Minister responsible for the Northern Territory was not aware of the existence of such a practice until it was brought to his attention by officers of the Department of the Interior in early 1933. The Minister referred the issue, first, to the 1933 Premier's Conference and then to a September meeting of the Federal Cabinet. Neither of these referrals produced a decision to endorse the scheme, let alone anything that could be called a Commonwealth or national policy on the issue.

Third, the Commonwealth government never gave the scheme any official approval. It existed only by virtue of a loophole in the discretion allowed the Chief Protector to approve or disapprove marriages of people of part-Aboriginal descent. No laws were ever passed or ordinances issued approving such a policy.

Fourth, once the matter emerged in public debate, the Commonwealth quickly became embarrassed by the implications of what Cook was trying to do. Some public servants saw clearly the offence against human rights involved. By August 1934, the responsible minister had publicly denounced the scheme, thereby rendering it defunct.

[156] Carrodus, Report on the Northern Territory, pars 190–1, file A1, 1934/10021, p 36

[157] reproduced in MacDonald, ed., *Between Two Worlds*, p 25

[158] *Aboriginal Welfare*, p 17

Fifth, although Jack Holloway probably overstated his accusation about preferential employment, the information he picked up in the Northern Territory about Cook's character was probably very close to the truth. Officially, Cook *was* an 'absolute crank', and his 'pet scheme' to breed all the half-castes in the Territory into white people represented bureaucratic social engineering at its worst — pretentious in ambition, inept in execution, and a complete failure in outcome.

Sixth, during this entire process of discussion and debate within the bureaucracy, in the parliament and in the press from 1930 to 1934, no one among either the supporters or detractors of Cook's scheme ever suggested it had any connection with the removal of Aboriginal children from their parents.

'BREEDING OUT THE COLOUR' AND GENOCIDE: A RE-ASSESSMENT

In this debate over policy, the historian Russell McGregor, author of the 1997 book *Imagined Destinies*, has been the best informed member of the pro-genocide team. Nonetheless, he has sizeable blind spots about the administrators A. O. Neville and Cecil Cook.

McGregor characterised Neville's outlook, correctly in my opinion, as 'a dour, authoritarian and arrogant humanitarianism' that insisted 'our coloured people must be helped in spite of themselves'.[159] But he found Neville guilty of failing the test of the United Nations' definition of genocide. McGregor wrote:

> Advocacy of the complete physical dissolution of the group of 'Aborigines' (of any degree of descent), combined with procedures designed to systematically achieve that objective, indicate an intent that is 'genocidal' according to the meaning of the term set out in the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.[160]

McGregor is seriously mistaken. His assessment avoided the fact that the great majority of Aborigines in Western Australia were of full, not part, descent. In law, Neville's ability to marry Aborigines into the white population never extended to Aborigines of full descent and, after the 1936 Act, he could not allow those of half descent to marry whites either. His marriage proposals did not advocate 'the complete physical dissolution' of any clearly identifiable group of Aborigines or part-Aborigines. He only had the ability to influence a minority of people of mixed descent, the fringe dwellers in camps on the edges of white towns and the welfare dependents inhabiting the state's sole government-sponsored settlement in the south at Moore

[159] McGregor, 'Breed out the Colour', p 300
[160] McGregor, 'Breed out the Colour', p 300

River. In neither of these cases could these people be classed as either a racially distinct group or a culturally coherent group. Many did not even identify as Aborigines. In supporting their assimilation, Neville could not be guilty of even the dubious charge of cultural genocide.

In reality, Neville lacked the funds to establish a marriage program of any credible kind. He also lacked the ability to impose his will on any of the Aboriginal mission settlements in the north-west and far north of the state where most Aborigines lived. The claim that Neville had 'procedures designed to systematically achieve that objective' is false. Neville could not and did not administer anything that resembled a *policy* to breed out the colour.

Neville's plans and the powers he gained from the 1936 Act were authoritarian, paternalistic, impersonally bureaucratic and, to many people today, morally obnoxious. I certainly find them so. They infringed the human rights of half-caste Aborigines and failed to treat them as the equal citizens they deserved to be. Paul Hasluck rightly denounced the 1936 Act for creating 'a system that confines the native within a legal status that has more in common with that of a born idiot than any other class of British subject'.[161] Nonetheless, to categorize Neville's ambitions as genocidal is a grotesque overstatement. His scheme was a hopeless failure. It was badly conceived, inadequately funded and never seriously implemented. It was of little consequence that Neville declared in 1937 that we could 'eventually forget there were any Aborigines in Australia'. That was all talk, from a man with a long track record of saying much but doing little.

There was an almost identical situation in the Northern Territory. In law, as Chief Protector of Aborigines in the Northern Territory Cecil Cook was obliged to uphold Commonwealth Ordinances which, until 1940, never deviated from the segregationist strictures imposed by J. W. Bleakley's report to Prime Minister Bruce in 1928. Commonwealth policy for the Territory forbade any attempt to breed out the colour of full-blood Aborigines, who constituted the great majority of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. The handful of marriags between part-Aboriginal women and white men arranged by Cook in the 1930s cannot be seriously regarded as anything that warranted McGregor's adjective 'systematic'. By the end of his term of office, Cook had failed to implement any of his various theories and he had no interest in who the girls in his care married.

Indeed, wherever Australian governments adhered to the twin policies of the segregation of full-blood Aborigines on reserves and

[161] Paul Hasluck, *Black Australians: A Survey of Native Policy in Western Australia 1829-1897*, (1942), Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2nd ed., 1970, pp 160–1

the banning of both marriage and cohabitation between them and white people, the accusation of genocide by breeding out Aboriginality cannot be sustained. The very act of segregating Aborigines in order to allow them, in the words of J. W. Bleakley, 'to retain their racial entity and racial pride', contradicts absolutely the change of genocide.

As far as the history of Aboriginal policy is concerned, breeding out the colour should be seen as no more than a short-lived bureaucratic curiosity. Within the context of their legal, political, financial and institutional environments, *none* of Australia's Aboriginal administrators ever had the means to make such a proposal work. And, to repeat, at no time or place did it ever provide the foundation of a program for the removal of Aboriginal children.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The 'totalitarian' regime of A. O. Neville

> The three simple interconnecting Edwardian offices are disarming in their stillness. It was from here that the individual lives of thousands of Aboriginal people of Western Australia were managed in minute detail. It was from here that, from 1915 to 1940, Mr A. O. Neville was installed as Chief Protector of Aborigines. From the corner of the largest room in the complex, tucked against the back veranda of the Colonial Secretary's Office, Neville oversaw the imposition of some of the most racist and damaging legislation ever inflicted upon a civilian population.
>
> — *First Australians: An Illustrated History*, companion book to the SBS Television series, 2008[1]

FROM 1925 to 1940, Western Australia's Department of Aboriginal Affairs occupied two rooms and the back veranda in the Chief Secretary's department in Murray Street, Perth. The author of the above passage from the book of the 2008 SBS Television series *First Australians*, should have given more thought to the size of the Chief Protector's office accommodation. A department that could be housed in such little space was a most unlikely candidate to manage Aboriginal affairs in the detail or inflict the damage the book claimed.[2] The historian Alison Holland also portrayed this as a prodigious project:

[1] Steve Keene, 'Blood History', in Rachel Perkins and Marcia Langton, eds, *First Australians: An Illustrated History*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2008, p 248

[2] Steve Keene actually exaggerates the little office space available. According to Neville's biographer, Pat Jacobs, in 1926 he moved into 'two small rooms

> In a massive exercise of social engineering, administrators orchestrated the assimilation of the 'half-castes' into the white population largely via separation from their people, training in institutions and marriage in the white community.[3]

In 1936, the administrators who purportedly did all this orchestrating consisted of seven people, the Chief Protector A. O. Neville, his long-time secretary Constance Stitfold, and five male clerks.[4] It was the smallest government department in Western Australia. In this, it was typical of the other Aboriginal affairs departments (where they existed) in other states. What made Western Australia particularly stand out was its miserly budget.

The Moseley Royal Commission in 1935 observed the 'continuing unsatisfactory state of finance' of the department and 'the very meagre vote with which to carry on its affairs'. Moseley published a small table of annual comparisons showing how far behind other states Western Australia lagged. New South Wales spent £53,124 a year on its Aboriginal population of 9724, or £5 9s per head. South Australia spent £23,000 on 3407 people, or £6 15s per head. Queensland spent £41,128 on 16,957 people, or £2 8s per head. Western Australia spent £28,340 on 19,021 people, or £1 9s per head per year.[5]

There was a similar discrepancy in the funds Western Australia spent on the welfare of white people compared to black people. Neville told Moseley that the government station at Moore River, which provided food, clothing and accommodation for poor Aborigines of all ages, spent £9 13s on each inmate per year, compared to

and a back veranda', not quite the three rooms Keene claims. Furnished with 'shabby rejects of other departments', the rooms were supposed to be only temporary quarters but Neville remained there until his retirement in 1940: Pat Jacobs, *Mister Neville*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 1990, p 127

[3] Alison Holland, ' "Whatever her Race, a Woman is not a Chattel" Mary Montgomery Bennett', in Anna Cole, Victoria Haskins and Fiona Paisley, eds, *Uncommon Ground: White Women in Aboriginal History*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2005, p 147

[4] Jacobs, *Mister Neville*, p 187; Peter Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens: The Aboriginal Problems in Western Australia 1898–1954*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1973, p 75

[5] Henry Doyle Moseley, *Report of the Royal Commissioner Appointed to Investigate, Report and Advise Upon Matters in Relation to the Condition and Treatment of Aborigines*, Government Printer, Perth, 1935, p 23. Moseley put the Aboriginal population at 29,021 but included in this was an estimated 10,000 who remained out of any contact with white society so, for the above calculation, the total has been reduced by 10,000. On Moseley's larger population, the annual expenditure would have been less than £1 per head per year.

state expenditure of £64 5s per inmate per year in Fremantle Gaol, and £48 11s per inmate per year at Pardelup Prison. At the Old Men's Home in Perth, the state spent 13 shillings a week on the upkeep of each white inmate; at Moore River the weekly expenditure on each individual was 3 shillings and 6 pence.[6] Neville complained:

> I have stated the strict truth that there is not enough money to feed and clothe the natives other than from a purely charitable point of view, and that has been the position for the last 15 years. During the whole of my experience there has been constant pressure to reduce expenditure, and that has been done of course at the expense of the natives.[7]

In practice, this meant that Neville did not have the staff or resources to implement a program for the removal of large numbers of half-caste children, nor for housing, clothing, feeding and educating them while they trained to enter the white world. Whatever may have been his plans and ambitions, Neville lacked the money to do very much about them. On these grounds alone, the accusation by the Human Rights Commission that he embarked upon a program of child removal large enough to be labelled genocidal is completely unbelievable. Neither the *Bringing Them Home* report, the SBS Television series, nor any of the academic historians in this debate have ever discussed the actual number of children removed in Western Australia. Nor have they examined the adequacy of the resources available to do so. They all lead their readers to believe Neville had enough money to do what he liked.

The parsimony of government funding had been the case ever since 1898 when Western Australia, the last of the states to gain full self-government, was ceded control of Aboriginal affairs by the British Colonial Office. The state created a sub-department of the Treasury, and allocated its Chief Protector of Aborigines a staff of only two clerks. The following year, this was reduced to one. Under the previous colonial regime, the Aborigines Protection Board had several office staff plus two travelling inspectors to distribute rations and oversee employment conditions on pastoral properties. In 1898, the government dismissed them and handed over the entire administration of the state's Aboriginal population to locals nominated as part-time protectors. Some of them were local magistrates and medical officers but most were country police officers who fulfilled the role unpaid, as part of their other responsibilities. They soon found the

[6] Neville, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 13 March 1934, transcript p 90

[7] Neville, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 13 March 1934, transcript p 91

work 'an irksome addition to their already manifold duties' and, in practice, declined to cooperate.[8]

As a result, the following year the department again employed a travelling inspector, its sole officer in the field, to service an area larger than western Europe. Apart from travelling from place to place, his time was largely consumed supervising the distribution of rations to Aborigines. By 1903 the position of travelling inspector was abolished once more, only to be revived in 1907 when two men were appointed, one for the Kimberley district, the other for the North-West. One of these was retrenched in 1910, the other in 1913. No subsequent appointment of this kind was made until 1925 when Neville employed one man, Ernest Charles Mitchell, to travel the whole of the state. His duties were all-embracing and included:

- supervising the distribution of rations to about 1400 old, sick and impoverished Aborigines,
- ensuring that those who engaged the 4300 Aborigines in employment were all licensed to do so and that payments and working conditions met acceptable standards,
- inspecting the nine missions and four government settlements funded by the department in the south-west, the goldfields, the north-west and the Kimberley,
- arranging the hospitalisation of diseased and injured Aborigines, and
- checking the integrity of the state's 16 Aboriginal reserves spread across 23 million acres.[9]

Like the Chief Protectors before him, Neville treated field staff as expendable. Within five years, he had retrenched Mitchell as an economy measure and left the position unfilled for another eight years.[10] In 1938, the new medical inspector travelled 9818 miles (15,800 kilometres) in twelve months, while the acting inspector, not surprisingly, 'found the work rather too much for him' and asked for other employment.[11]

The local police who were once more allocated the inspectors' former duties remained focused primarily on law enforcement. The only effective task they performed as protectors was to distribute rations of food and clothing to indigent Aborigines. Apart from that, unless there was some obvious crisis, they put off or avoided anything

[8] Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, pp 45–7

[9] The statistics for Mitchell's years in the job come from Appendices IV, V, VI and VII in Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, pp 275–80

[10] Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, p 75

[11] *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs for the Year Ended 30th June 1938*, Government Printer, Perth, 1939, p 7

to do with welfare or employment regulation. This meant the department was effectively devoid of an administrative structure to put into practice the various social policies the Chief Protectors talked about. In this, Neville was no different from those before him, Henry Prinsep (Chief Protector from 1898 to 1907) and Charles Gale (1907 to 1915). Each of them advanced proposals to protect the full-blood Aborigines from disease, alcohol, sexual abuse and labour exploitation, as well as to prepare the half-castes for employment in white society. But none had the money or the administrative infrastructure to do much about any of them.

Hence, rather than requiring its Chief Protector to manage 'the individual lives of thousands of Aboriginal people' in 'minute detail', the reality was that the government neglected them. Throughout Neville's term of office, even though Aboriginal people constituted about 6 per cent of the total population, the state normally allocated only about 0.3 per cent of its annual budget for their provision and management.[12] In other words, it is very obvious that none of the governments of Western Australia in this period ever cared enough about the Aborigines to want to commit genocide on them.

THE TOTALITARIANISM OF THE CHIEF PROTECTOR

> The 1905 Act controlled virtually every aspect of Aboriginal lives — with whom they could associate, where they could live and work, and their earnings, personal property, family life, marriage, and sexual contacts — and allowed for their removal to institutions where they could be detained indefinitely. Fines and imprisonment awaited those who dared not to comply with its provisions. Such was the virtually totalitarian control vested in the so-called Chief Protector of Aborigines.
>
> — Anna Haebich, 'Clearing the Wheat Belt', 2004[13]

The notion that A. O. Neville was all-powerful within his domain bears little resemblance to reality. For a start, he was a government-employed public servant, answerable to his Minister and sworn to obey the laws and regulations of the parliament. Moreover, he had direct control over the lives of very few of the state's Aborigines. Only a fraction of the population lived on the government stations run by his department. In the 1930s, there were at most 400 inhabitants of the Moore River settlement and another 400 living permanently on the three Kimberley stations of Moola Bulla, Violet Valley

[12] Appendices I and III in Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, pp 271, 273

[13] Anna Haebich, ' "Clearing the Wheat Belt": Erasing the Indigenous Presence in the Southwest of Western Australia', in Dirk Moses, ed., *Genocide and Settler Society*, Berghan Books, New York, 2004, p 272

and Munja Station.[14] They constituted a mere 4 per cent of the 19,000 Aborigines living in the state's settled districts.

In it true, however, that the 1905 Aborigines Act relegated people of Aboriginal descent to the status of second class citizens, with restrictions placed on their movement and where they could live. Section 12 of the 1905 Aborigines Act gave the Chief Protector the authority to remove people to an Aboriginal reserve and keep them there. He also had guardianship over children aged up to sixteen until 1936, and up to 21 years from 1936 to 1940. He could send them to the Moore River settlement, to any other station or to a mission, and compel them to remain there. If they ran away, he could demand the police pursue them and send them back. Under his regime, the police could not act on their own initiative. Even though a number of police officers throughout the state were appointed local protectors of Aborigines, they could only remove Aboriginal children if they had Neville's permission. If they found children seriously neglected or malnourished, they had to write to Neville, the children's legal guardian, for his authorization to deliver them to a mission or settlement where they might receive proper care.

None of the institutions in Western Australia resembled gulags or concentration camps. If adults could provide for themselves through employment, Neville did not hold them in an institution against their will. Between 1930 and 1934, for instance, the Moore River Settlement admitted 1067 people, but over the same period 1030 people left.[15] Neville presented these figures to the Moseley Royal Commission as an answer to critics of his period, especially the Women's Service Guild, who called his settlement a prison. Neville said:

> A great deal has been said about the prison nature of Moore River Settlement. These figures absolutely give the lie to that. There are almost as many departures as arrivals, and there always have been. They are coming and going all the time, and it is nothing in the nature of a prison except in the case of those under warrant, 200 in the last three years, and those that may have been there before and the young children who are not allowed to go out while they are wards of the department.[16]

Neville's limited budget gave him a compelling financial incentive to prevent his charges becoming complete dependents. In the southern districts he wanted them to gain outside employment in the agricultural economy.

[14] Moseley, *Report of the Royal Commissioner*, p 13

[15] Neville, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 3 May 1934, transcript p 603

[16] Neville, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 3 May 1934, transcript p 604

It is not proposed that the settlements should be regarded as prisons; the natives come and go, the workers leave their families and their children remain at school. We are able to find work for those who want it and send them out to it.[17]

In the Kimberley, the three government cattle stations each had a small number of permanent Aboriginal dependents but a shifting population of several hundred more maintained a loose attachment, coming in occasionally for rations but living mainly in the bush. These stations had been established primarily to provide local Aborigines with a regular supply of meat to prevent them randomly killing the sheep and cattle of local pastoralists. Neville told Moseley:

Those stations are sanctuaries to which all natives repair whenever they want to. They sit down for a few weeks, enjoy as much meat as they can eat, and then go off again.[18]

Table 8.1 summarizes how small was the empire he had accumulated by the 1930s, and how few were the number of children he brought under his control. Only two of these six institutions were exclusively for Aboriginal children: the Home for Girls at East Perth and Sister Kate's home at Queen's Park. The government settlements and stations accommodated Aborigines of all ages. Most children accommodated at these settlements were accompanied by their parents.

Unlike the genuinely totalitarian powers of the state under Nazi and Communist regimes, Western Australia's Chief Protector inhabited a democratic, pluralistic society where opposing interests competed for power and where the bureaucracy of the public service was often the weakest player. From the 1900s to the 1940s the three competitors in Aboriginal affairs were the pastoralists, the missionaries and Neville's department, in that order of influence. The first two interest groups were usually able to marshal more political strength and bring pressure to bear on government decision-making far more effectively than the department.

Most missions were located in the northern half of the state and most of their Aboriginal inhabitants were beyond the control of the Chief Protector. While state law gave Neville the nominal authority to control Aboriginal family life and sexual relations, in practice the missions acted on their own principles in such matters. As Neville complained to his peers at the 1937 Canberra conference:

[17] Neville, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 12 March 1934, transcript p 25

[18] Neville, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 12 March 1934, transcript p 27

> At the mission stations, the natives are encouraged to multiply by marriage, with a consequent increase of population. The missions are thus able to claim that they are doing valuable work for the natives. Undoubtedly they are doing good work, but they keep an increasing number of natives on their properties, whereas the departmental institutions, whilst approving marriages, encourage the natives to mix with the general community and earn their own living ... Under this law [the 1936 Act] no half-caste need be allowed to marry a full-blooded aboriginal if it is possible to avoid it, but the missions do not always take steps to prevent this from occurring; they allow the half-castes under their control to marry anybody.[19]

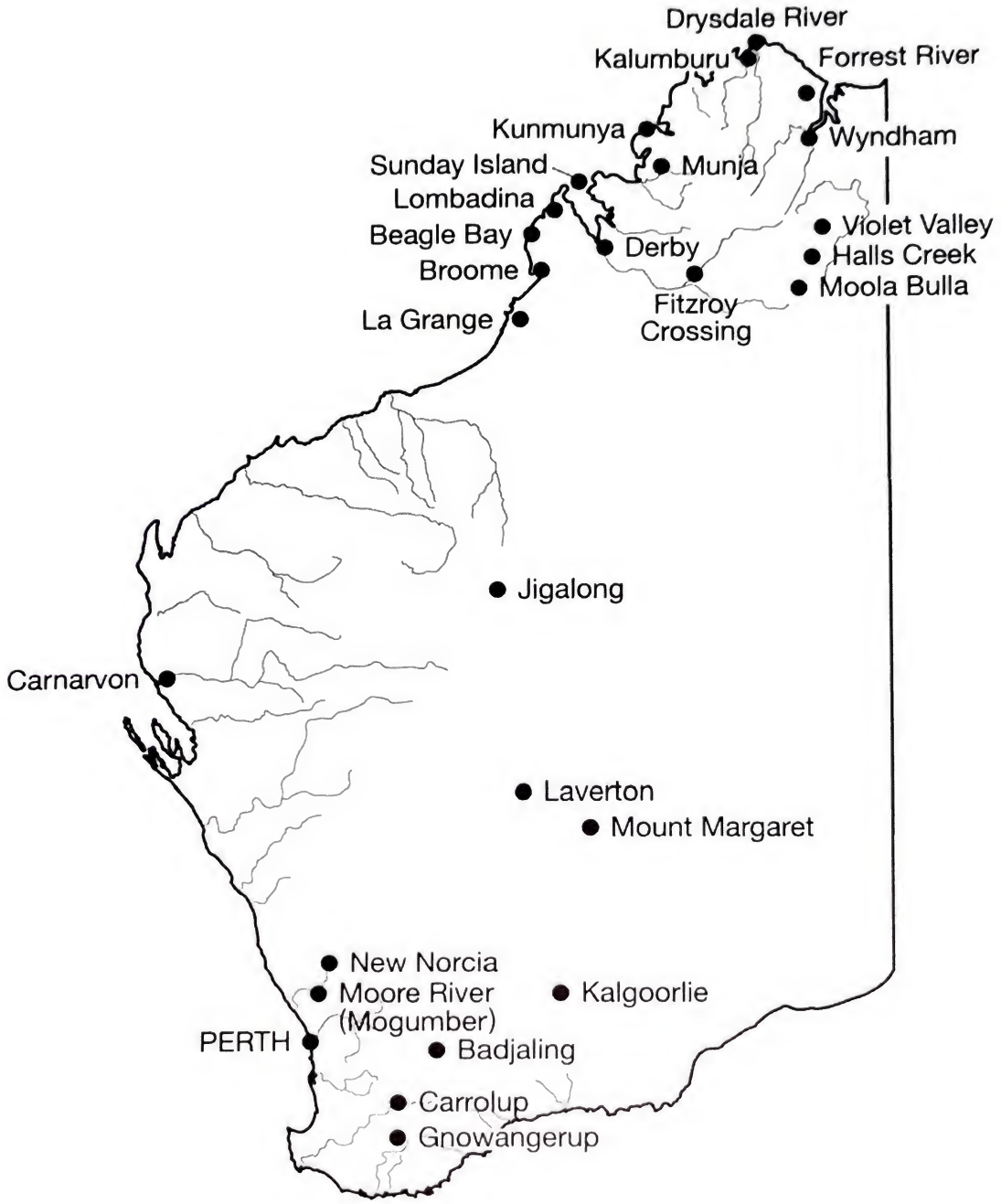
TABLE 8.1: ABORIGINAL CHILDREN AT GOVERNMENT SETTLEMENTS AND CHILDREN'S HOMES, WESTERN AUSTRALIA, 1932–34

Name	*Operated by*	*Approx. number of children*
Moore River Settlement	Government	120
Moola Bulla Station	Government	40
Munja Station	Government	12★
Violet Valley Station	Government	6★
Home for Girls, East Perth	Government	12
Sister Kate's Queen's Park	Government-subsidised	22
Total		212

Sources: A. O. Neville, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 12 March 1934, transcript p 15, 14 March 1934, transcript p 133 and 3 May 1934, transcript p 626; Moseley, *Report of the Royal Commissioner*, p 13; return from Parkerville Children's Home to Aborigines Department, 1932, cited by Vera Whittington, *Sister Kate*, p 276; Queen's Park home's enrolments from Whittington, *Sister Kate*, p 322.

★ my estimate based on Moseley, *Report of the Royal Commissioner*, p 13, and *Report of the Chief Protector for the Year Ending 30th June 1928*, p 9

[19] Address to conference, published in *Aboriginal Welfare: Initial Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities Held at Canberra, 21st to 23rd April 1937*, Government Printer, Canberra, 1937, p 11



Western Australia 1900–1950, showing locations of major government Aboriginal settlements, religious missions and other places mentioned in the text.

While some of the Catholic missions were run by Spanish, French and German orders whose ideals favoured closed religious communities, others maintained good contacts with state politicians, the southern press, and the Perth professional and middle classes. They were especially influential with church-going middle-class women who, in the early 1930s, rallied to the public appeals of the Women's Service Guild. By 1934 the Guild successfully pushed the state government into ordering, against Neville's opposition, a Royal Commission into his administration.

During Neville's regime, by far the most powerful interest group in Aboriginal affairs was not the Chief Protector's department but the pastoralists. This was partly because pastoralists were directly responsible for the well-being of many more Aborigines than department and missions together. They accommodated about 6500 of the state's 19,000 Aborigines in the settled districts, employing them on their sheep and cattle stations as permanent, seasonal or casual labourers and domestic servants, and taking responsibility for the sustenance of their extended families.[20]

The pastoralists also had the most political clout. For most of the period under discussion, they managed to get compliant political representatives elected to the pastoral electorates of the north-west and the Kimberley. The most reliable historian of these affairs, Peter Biskup, has provided an account of state politics that shows the pastoralists' politicians were usually able to serve their industry's interests and preserve their employment arrangements no matter how much they conflicted with the Chief Protector's own plans and projects.[21] Biskup described the political scene as Western Australia entered the 1930s:

The onset of the depression forced Neville to abandon all hopes of reform in the pastoral industry. Late in 1929 the Legislative Assembly threw out his bill to amend the 1905 Aborigines Act; in 1930 the Treasury cut his grant and he had to dismiss his only travelling inspector (appointed in 1925); the trade unions, with one out of every three white men jobless, were increasingly unhappy about 'discrimination' [against them] in the pastoral industry; the pastoralists with numerous problems of their own, were in no mood for dictation from above.[22]

This is anything but the portrait of the Chief Protector as totalitarian dictator. Those who make this claim should not be taken seriously.

[20] Moseley, *Report of the Royal Commissioner*, pp 5–6
[21] Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, pp 96–111
[22] Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, p 110

EDUCATION AND TRAINING POLICY FOR HALF-CASTE PEOPLE

> If the coloured people of this country are to be absorbed into the general community they must be thoroughly fit and educated at least to the extent of the three R's. If they can read, write and count, and know what wages they should get, and how to enter into an agreement with an employer, that is all that should be necessary. Once that is accomplished there is no reason in the world why these coloured people should not be absorbed into the community. To achieve this end, however, we must have charge of the children at the age of six years; it is useless to wait until they are twelve or thirteen years of age.
>
> — A. O. Neville, Canberra, 21 April 1937[23]

There is no doubt that Neville wanted Aboriginal people of half or less descent (which is what he meant here by 'coloured people') to find employment and assimilate into the white community. He also thought that by giving Aboriginal children an education in the three R's plus some vocational training, he could go a long way towards accomplishing this. He told the 1937 Canberra conference he wanted their education to begin at six years of age. He had the authority to compel this by removing children from their families wherever necessary: 'In Western Australia we have the power under the act to take any child from its mother at any stage of its life, no matter whether the mother be legally married or not.' But he was also forced to admit that his ambitions amounted to nothing more than an 'intention' to do something in the future, rather than a program that could be practically achieved in the present. 'It is, however, our intention to establish sufficient settlements to undertake the training and education of these children so that they may become absorbed into the general community.'[24] In 1937, Neville was, as usual, talking big but doing little.

The idea of preparing half castes to enter mainstream white society through education and training long predated Neville's appointment as Chief Protector. It originated long before he or anyone else developed the notion of breeding out the colour. It went back to the nineteenth century when the state government took over Aboriginal affairs. The first Chief Protector, Henry Charles Prinsep, proposed that he should become the legal guardian of all Aboriginal children until they turned sixteen. He believed it was 'our duty to make good citizens of them by every means in our power', but he despaired of the prevailing ethos in the camps and communities in which they grew up:

[23] *Aboriginal Welfare*, p 11
[24] *Aboriginal Welfare*, p 11

> unfortunately they are more often found in communities whose influence is towards laziness and vice; and I think it is our duty not to allow these children, whose blood is half British, to grow up as vagrants and outcasts, as their mothers now are.[25]

With the enactment of the 1905 Aborigines Act, Prinsep gained the guardianship of children under sixteen that he wanted. He could remove children from their mothers any time he chose. But he had nowhere to put them and no money to provide any of the education and training he thought they needed. He could rely upon some of the missions to take a few needy children as welfare cases but had no institutional structure to do this himself.

Indeed, under this and subsequent administrations, Aboriginal education and training went steeply backwards. In 1901, 31 per cent of part-Aborigines over the age of five could read and write and about the same proportion were being educated, largely at state and mission schools. Twenty years later, Peter Biskup records, these statistics had fallen so low it was thought prudent not to record them.[26] This outcome was a direct result of the transfer of responsibility for the schooling of Aboriginal children away from the state Education Department and into the hands of the Aborigines Department.

The 1871 Elementary Education Act made school attendance compulsory for every child living with three miles of a state school. However, an 1897 amendment to the Aborigines Protection Act made the Aborigines Department responsible for the education of both full-blood and half-caste Aborigines. Just like every other case in Australian history where a government has abandoned universal education principles in favour of separate education for Aboriginal children, this one failed too. The transfer of responsibility was not accompanied by a corresponding transfer of money from the Treasury.

For several years this did not matter much because half-caste children still attended state schools. But by 1912, the increasing numbers of half-caste schoolchildren led parents of white children at some state schools at Katanning and adjacent towns in the Great Southern district to protest about their presence. They objected to the standards of hygiene and morality and the incidence of disease of children from Aboriginal families, most of whom lived in makeshift accommodation in fringe camps on reserves that lacked water supplies and sanitation. During the subsequent conflict between white parents and the education authorities, Prinsep's successor, Charles Gale, drew up a proposal to construct and employ teachers for thirteen schools to educate Aboriginal children separately. Two schools at Katanning and Bever-

[25] quoted in Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, p 142
[26] Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, p 148

ley subsequently became 'native schools' operated by the Chief Protector but otherwise none of these plans were fulfilled.[27]

In 1915, the state government established for the southern Aborigines a new settlement at Carrolup for both adults and children. It was designed to solve the twin problems of where to house the growing numbers of fringe-dwelling half-caste families and how to provide separate education for their children. The two native schools were closed and Carrolup became a government station which provided housing and distributed rations to about 150 local Aborigines, and conducted a school for their children. Its first buildings were impressive, with dormitories and schoolhouse 'most elaborate in structure' and built of stone.[28] Soon after Carrolup was established, Neville became Chief Protector and drew up ambitious plans to provide it with a hospital and a farm to make residents self-sufficient and train Aboriginal youth in agricultural pursuits. He also began the establishment of a second government station with similar aims at Mogumber, north of Perth on the Moore River. By 1922, however, the state government had decided the two settlements cost too much money. Carrolup was closed, its usable land and buildings leased to local farmers. Its former inhabitants were put aboard a train bound for Moore River, now the government's sole Aboriginal settlement in the entire southern half of the state.[29]

TRAINING FOR HALF-CASTES AT MOORE RIVER

> I visited the Moore River Settlement several times. The setting was a poor one with no advantage for anyone except isolation. The facilities were limited and some of them were makeshift. The staff were inadequate both in numbers and qualification. The inmates disliked the place. It held no promise of a future for any of them and they had little or no satisfaction in the present. It was a dump.
>
> — Paul Hasluck on Moore River Settlement [30]

[27] Neville, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 14 March 1934, transcript p 121; Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, p 151

[28] Moseley, *Report of the Royal Commissioner*, p 14

[29] Jacobs, *Mister Neville*, pp 84–7, 106–9; Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, pp 148–56. Between 1920 and 1925, the government split Aboriginal affairs in Western Australia into two divisions. Neville was appointed Secretary of the Department of the North-West and made responsible for the part of the state north of Carnarvon, where the Aboriginal population was largely full-blood. He had no say in the closure of Carrolup and for years after he regained responsibility for all the Aborigines of the state he remained highly critical of the decision to close it.

[30] Paul Hasluck, *Shades of Darkness*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1988, p 65

The Moore River Settlement was established on a reserve of 11,600 acres, of which about 400 acres was cleared land. Accommodation was divided into two main areas, known as 'the camp' and 'the compound'. The camp housed about 150 people of all ages, described in the Moseley Report as 'indigent natives and their families'. The compound was about 300 metres distant. It contained separate male and female dormitories for school-age children. All up, at any one time the compound accommodated between 100 and 200 young people. Most of them were children of school age whose parents lived in the camp, plus a small number of orphans, neglected and other half-caste children sent there to be educated and trained for the workforce. Neville described this arrangement as a happy one for children whose parents lived at the camp but not so for those 'forcibly' removed.

> Where you can have the mothers and the children, as at our settlement, the children at school but visiting the mothers in the camp, although not allowed to live in the camp but living in the dormitories, everybody is happy. But where the children are forcibly taken away from their mothers, it seems cruel ... But we must think of the future of the child. In many instances the mothers are utterly unfit to care for the child. Where there is no question of unfitness the mother should be allowed to accompany the child.[31]

The camp was largely populated by Aborigines dependent on welfare. Neville described them as people 'removed from towns on account of their bad behaviour, women who were incorrigible prostitutes, the men drunkards and even murderers'.[32] Paul Hasluck described the settlement as 'a general dumping ground' for every difficult welfare case in both the north and south of the state.

> The aged and indigent who had nowhere else to go were sent there. The discharged prisoner who was far from home, the juvenile delinquent, the 'problem' Aborigines who had been ordered out of town for drinking, misbehaving or showing some similar need of 'protective custody', the orphan, the neglected child and the unemployed were all likely to end up at Moore River.[33]

The Moseley Report was even more critical of the quality of the camp's population and recommended the people be removed to some other location immediately because of the clash between its example of welfare dependency and the ostensible goals of the compound of training the children for the workforce.

[31] Neville, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 14 March 1934, transcript p 120

[32] *Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for the Year Ending 30th June 1919*, p 11e

[33] Hasluck, *Shades of Darkness*, p 64

> The inmates of the compound are admitted for protection and education and I found them living within a few hundred yards of a collection of useless, loafing natives, content to do nothing and always ready to entice the compound girls to the camp. It would be better that the grown-up people should be sent away and the children taken from their parents and put in the compound than that the inmates of the compound should be under such a contaminating influence. It is, in my opinion, and in the opinion of the staff at Moore River, a menace to the settlement.[34]

Moseley observed, however, that the Chief Protector had no plans in train to resolve this problem and, indeed, was in the process of erecting new camp accommodation, even at the same time as he advised otherwise.

The compound was supposed to be an institution for both education and training of young people, but the paucity of resources and facilities made the latter impossible. While there was a school that taught basic literacy and numeracy, there was no vocational training for those nearing working age except a sewing room where 25 girls from the compound manufactured clothing by machine and by hand.[35] They produced about 3500 garments a year, which the department handed out to Aborigines at its various ration depots. The girls received no wages for their work.[36] 'This represents a considerable saving to the department,' Neville told Moseley. 'The work was previously done by contract and now the cost represents the expense of the material only.'[37] Moseley questioned Neville further:

> *Apart from elementary education, are facilities provided for vocational training?* — No such facilities are provided except the sewing room.
>
> *What vocational training is provided for the boys?* — They do a little farm work, but the country is such that there is little scope for them. There is no workshop.
>
> *Are there any means to teach them carpentering and blacksmithing for instance?* — There is a small blacksmith's shop designed to do the work required on the place, but there is no carpenter's shop and no vocational training

[34] Moseley, *Report of the Royal Commissioner*, pp 12–13

[35] Arthur Neal, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 9 April 1934, transcript, Part 2, p 1

[36] *West Australian*, 28 December 1928, cited by Susan Maushart, *Sort of a Place Like Home: Remembering the Moore River Native Settlement*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 1993, p 262

[37] Neville, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 14 March 1934, transcript p 122

> provided beyond clearing scrub, making roads, quarrying and a few odd jobs of that kind, apart of course from doing the work about the place.[38]

After his inspection of Moore River, Moseley's report was scathing about the absence of any semblance of training:

> With the exception of the work done in the sewing room, in which I am informed clothing is made for all indigent natives throughout the State, and a small amount of sand brick making, nothing is being done in the way of vocational training, because no equipment is provided. Even starting in a small way with a few blacksmith's tools and a carpenter's shop, a great deal could be done. The Superintendent, I understand, is capable of giving instruction.
>
> The head teacher of the school asks for certain apparatus to enable her to train the elder girls in household duties. At the present little can be attempted, although, of course, practical experience of a kind is gained by some of the girls in the dormitories, dining room, and kitchen.
>
> The equipment in the dining room is deficient, and, with few exceptions, the children had no implements of any kind to aid them in eating. Judging by their dexterity in the use of their fingers, I am afraid they have little knowledge of any other method, though I did not experiment with a child and one of the few spoons available. I am told that there had been a sudden disappearance of spoons, and that more had been ordered.[39]

Moseley despaired of the living conditions in the compound: 'The dormitories are vermin ridden to an extent which I suspect makes eradication impossible.' He also condemned the notorious shed in which escapees were confined as punishment. Known as 'the boob', Moseley's description confirmed the historical accuracy of at least one of the sets in the film *Rabbit-Proof Fence*:

> I disliked its appearance very much. A small detached 'room' made of posts driven into the ground, floor of white sand, scarcely a gleam of light, and little ventilation, and I was told that inmates have been incarcerated in this place for as long as 14 days. It is barbarous treatment and the place should be pulled down.[40]

The Moseley Report provided sufficient grounds for his minister to dismiss Neville for failing to fulfil his department's major objectives. Unfortunately, nothing of the kind occurred. Neville continued to blame his problems on the lack of money provided by the government, while the government itself seemed so little concerned about Aboriginal welfare it continued to employ him, even as he ignored

[38] Neville, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 14 March 1934, transcript pp 121–2
[39] Moseley, *Report of the Royal Commissioner*, p 12
[40] Moseley, *Report of the Royal Commissioner*, p 12

those of Moseley's criticisms that would have involved little or no expense, such as ridding the dormitories of vermin (lice and bed bugs[41]) and closing down the barbaric 'boob'. For his part, Neville publicly rejected most of Moseley's criticisms. He mounted a spirited defence of his administration in the press, using his long-standing rhetorical strategy of saying any problems identified had already been or were soon to be fixed. The *West Australian* reported:

> He felt sure that if the Royal Commissioner on Aborigines (Mr H. D. Moseley) visited the settlement now he would be the first to agree that the expression 'woeful spectacle' could no longer apply to it, repairs and additions having been made.[42]

Neville held his position until 1940, giving it up only because he reached the public service compulsory retiring age of 65. Although I defended him in the previous chapter from the charge of genocide, it is impossible to defend the man's record as an administrator. He was an uninspiring time server, more talk than action. Even his own pet project to breed out the colour produced no outcome to speak of, except a loathsome reputation. It is an indictment of Western Australian governments of all political persuasions that they kept him in his position for as long as they did. In doing so, they confirmed the assessment I made earlier: the Aborigines were the lowest of all their priorities and had the least call on either their funding or their concern.

The 'forcible removal' of children to Moore River

Given the reputation of the Moore River Settlement and the unenviable place it has earned in the national psyche through the film *Rabbit-Proof Fence* and the SBS television series *First Australians*, one might expect that, by now, everyone interested in the subject would know how many stolen children passed through those terrible gates. Strange as it might seem, none of those who have condemned Moore River have provided any numbers to back their claims. Neither the *Bringing Them Home* report nor the academic historians and commentators Anna Haebich, Russell McGregor, Robert Manne and Raimond Gaita have told how many children were forcibly removed there.

The truth is there were not very many. In 1934, when the state's Aboriginal population in the settled districts was 19,000, the compound housed only 134 children. Of this group, 54 girls and 41 boys

[41] Annette Roberts, *Sister Eileen: A Life With the Lid Off*, Access Press, Bassendean, 2002, p 37

[42] *West Australian*, 31 July 1936, cited by Maushart, *Sort of a Place Like Home*, p 291

were divided by age into two classes and taught in the school, 14 children were of kindergarten age and taught in a separate class,[43] and another 25 girls were employed in the sewing room.[44]

The majority were children of parents who lived in the camp and, though sleeping in the dormitory at night, spent some time with their parents most days. If they wanted their children to go to school, or if they wanted to live in the camp's cottages rather than tents or makeshift shelters, parents had to surrender their children to the compound. Although the camp was off limits at night to compound children, the staff did not prevent their coming and going in the daytime. There was no fence between camp and compound, only open space and bush, so the separation of children from parents would have been impossible to police anyway.[45] And despite the rules, some children who went to the compound school in the daytime still lived and slept at night with parents or relatives in the camp.[46] None of these could properly be labelled 'stolen' or even 'removed' from their parents.

However, there were some children who were orphans or otherwise 'unattended' by parents or relatives who were required by law to go to Moore River. These were the only possible candidates for the category of 'forcible removals'. In March 1934, there were 64 unattended children at the settlement, all sent there since January 1930.[47] Some of these had arrived in 1933 as part of an emergency intake when a group of 87 adults and children from the fringe camp at Northam suspected of harbouring an epidemic of scabies were sent to Moore River to be quarantined until free of the disease.[48] In more normal periods, there were actually fewer admissions of unattended children. In 1931, when the girls who featured in the book and film *Rabbit-Proof Fence* were sent to Moore River, they were three of only four children admitted that year.[49]

[43] Gladys Mansfield, head teacher, Moore River School, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 9 April 1934, transcript, Part 2, p 11

[44] Arthur Neal, superintendent, Moore River Native Settlement, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 9 April 1934, transcript Part 2, p 1

[45] Roberts, *Sister Eileen*, pp 50, 63–4

[46] Report by Australian Aboriginal Amelioration Association, *West Australian*, 26 June 1936, cited by Maushart, *Sort of a Place Like Home*, pp 286–91; further discussion by Neville is quoted by Maushart pp 291–7

[47] Neville, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 3 May 1934, transcript p 603

[48] Arthur Neal, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 9 April 1934, transcript Part 2, p 6

[49] *Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for the Year Ended 30th June 1931*, typescript version, p 12

TABLE 8.2: 'UNATTENDED' CHILDREN SENT PER YEAR TO MOORE RIVER SETTLEMENT, 1915–1940

Year	*Number of children*
1915	0
1916	0
1917	0
1918	0
1919	–
1920	20
1921	0
1922	60
1923	0
1924	0
1925	10
1926	8
1927	0
1928	12
1929	0
1930–1934	64
1935	0
1936	18
1937	9
1938	23
1939	18
1940	10
Total	252

Source: Annual Reports of Chief Protector of Aborigines, 1915–1940. No annual report from 1919 appears to have survived. The State Library of Western Australia holds ether the original typescript or printed versions of all remaining reports. After 1936 the report was called the Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs, Government Printer, Perth.

Notes to Table 8.2: From 1915 to 1920, unattached half-caste children were normally sent to the Dulh Ggunyah Orphanage, Victoria Park, run by the Australian Aborigines Mission. When Dulhi Gunyah closed in 1919, it held 19 unattached children who were transferred to the Carrolup Settlement.

The number for 1920 is my estimate from that annual report, which said the Moore River Settlement received 45 additional inmates of all ages and: 'Quite a number of half-caste children were admitted from different parts of the state.'

Notes to Table 8.2 continued: The number for 1922 is my estimate of the number of unattached children transferred to Moore River when the Carrolup settlement closed in 1922, and *includes* the 19 sent to Carrolup from Dulhi Gunyah in 1919.

The number from 1930–1934 is from Neville's evidence to the Moseley Royal Commission, 3 May 1934, transcript p 603. They included the four removals to Moore River in 1931 recorded in *Annual Report of the Chief Protector*, 1931, p 12.

Numbers for 1925, 1926, 1937 and 1938 are my estimates. Reports for those years gave the totals of both parents and children sent to Moore River, which were 20, 16, 17 and 46, respectively, but provided no separate figure for children. To estimate the latter I divided the total by two.

In 1939, the report said 15 women and children were sent to Moore River. I estimate 8 of these were children, plus another 10 children were sent from outside the south-west districts.

In 1940, the report said 19 women and children went to Moore River. I estimate this as 10 children.

Although the individual files of the settlement's inmates were not available for my examination under the policy of the State Records Office of Western Australia to reserve them for people who claim a family connection, the Chief Protector's annual reports (of which the State Library of Western Australia has an almost complete set) usually recorded the number of Aborigines removed that year under Section 12 of the Aborigines Act and/or the number of removals of child wards of the Chief Protector. The figures I have compiled from this source are in Table 8.2. As I observe in the notes to the table, I had to estimate several of the numbers, particularly when the only total given that year was a combined figure for both parents and children. In these cases, I estimated the number of children by presuming they made up half the admissions. The table records a total of just 252 unattended children removed to Moore River over a period of 25 years, or an average of only ten children a year. Even if some removals were not recorded in the annual reports, it is very unlikely that this would distort the true picture very much. Even if we arbitrarily doubled the total, it would still not fit the story purveyed by academic historians, television producers and the Human Rights Commission, all of whom talk not of hundreds of forcible removals in Western Australia, but of thousands. On the evidence of the available records, their version is out by more than a factor of ten. It could not possibly be true.

These children were the only possible contenders we know of who might have been members of the Stolen Generations at Moore River. However, because there were so few of them, and because orphans,

abandoned, destitute, abused and sexually vulnerable children were Neville's first priority, all of them were most likely to have been removed for reasons of child welfare no different to those applied to white children, then and now. In response to one of his critics at the Moseley Royal Commission, Mary Bennett of the Women's Service Guild, Neville pointed out that he only had resources to remove genuine welfare cases, and that even within this category there were still many he had to leave in fringe camps against his better judgement. In light of the misrepresentations by academic historians and, in particular, the deception practised by the *Bringing Them Home* report,[50] I will quote Neville's defence of his removal practices at some length.

> I say emphatically there are scores of children in the bush camps who should be taken away from whoever is looking after them and placed in a settlement, but on account of lack of accommodation, and lack of means and additional settlements, I am unable to exercise the power which the Act definitely gives me in this respect. If we are going to fit and train such children for the future they cannot be left as they are. ...
>
> In every camp there are half-castes and coloured children that we have never given any thought to remove, except in general with their parents, and do not wish to do so now. The witness evidently forgets that a number of these children are definitely orphaned, or their mothers have gone off with someone else and definitely left them. We had one who was picked up in King's Park as a baby, and another who was abandoned by the natives on the Goldfields. Then in other cases the natives have asked for the removal of children, and even adults. Again, native parents have placed their children with us deliberately, being quite satisfied to do so ...
>
> We do not take infants from their mothers. The minimum age is six years, and generally not then. If we have to do what is unusual, viz. take a child from its mother, it is because the mother is not fit to look after it. Again others that have been recommended for removal are left in the bush because they have attained certain years and to attempt to train them would be little use.[51]

[50] *Bringing Them Home*, p 109, quotes part of the speech that follows here but leaves out crucial clauses. In the first sentence here, it quotes only the following: 'I say emphatically there are scores of children in the bush camps who should be taken away from whoever is looking after them and placed in a settlement ... If we are going to fit and train such children for the future they cannot be left as they are.' *Bringing Them Home* thus makes it appear that Neville was declaring his determination to remove scores of such children, whereas the full sentence reveals he was really explaining why he could *not* remove them.

[51] Neville, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 3 May 1934, transcript pp 604–5

The *Rabbit-Proof Fence* story gave the impression that large numbers of children were removed from distant parts of the state to Moore River. This was a view shared by Neville's political opponents at the time, but was untrue. In response to charges made to the Moseley Royal Commission by the Labor member for Kimberley, Aubrey Coverley, that Neville should not be removing half-caste children from the north of the state to Moore River for training,[52] Neville gave figures for the number of children sent there from the Kimberley district up to 1934:

> [I]n my time (18 years) only about a score of half-caste girls have been removed from the Kimberleys, and a few boys, and with the exception of three girls recently arrived from Moola Bulla, none since 1927. During the same time numbers have entered the missions within the Kimberleys and more recently some 40 children have been gathered at Moola Bulla station, so you will see that the department cannot be accused of anything like wholesale removals of children from the far North.[53]

Moreover, this account was not simply a momentary defensive outburst to rescue his position from attack. The same story appears consistently across the years in the fine print of Neville's annual reports on the activities of his department. For instance, during 1936 and 1937, the years when Robert Manne assured us 'genocidal thought and administrative practice touched',[54] Neville reported as follows:

> 1936: Removals under Section 12: The total number of removals to institutions or reserves under Section12, that is, by warrant issued by order of the Minister or by arrangement with the child Welfare department, was three men, seven women and 30 children. Actually, 15 warrants were issued by this Department covering 26 persons. The families removed to Moore River Settlement included two widows and eight children, having four respectively, and another woman with three children who had deserted her husband but who has since rejoined him taking the two youngest children with her. Seven children abandoned by their parents, orphans or living in undesirable surroundings, were taken in charge of by the Department. Eleven others were removed from homes where the conditions were unfit for them.[55]
>
> 1937: Women and Children: Fourteen warrants under section 12 were issued for the removal of 24 persons, 17 of whom were women and chil-

[52] A. A. M. Coverley, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 27 March 1934, transcript, p 405

[53] Neville, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 3 May 1934, transcript p 626

[54] Robert Manne, *In Denial: The Stolen Generations and the Right*, Australian Quarterly Essay, Black Inc, Melbourne, 2001, p 40

[55] *Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for the Year Ended 30th June 1936*, p 9

> dren destined for Moore River Native Settlement. Of these some were sent in because of health reasons and mainly because of the condition of the children's eyes which required prompt attention, and the others due to the undesirable conditions under which the children were living. Residence at Moore River in the case of most of these is likely to be only temporary.[56]

In short, the available historical sources are telling. Moreover, there is no good reason to disbelieve them or to treat what Neville wrote as a cover-up for evil motives. Just about the last thing he could ever have imagined was that one day his record would have to answer to left-wing historians who accused him of genocide. In short, Neville did not remove half-caste and other part-Aboriginal children to any institution in the south of the state simply because of their Aboriginality. Under his regime, the number of children removed was very small and removals were grounded in the same principles of social welfare that applied to white children.

THE HOME FOR GIRLS AT EAST PERTH

Apart from Moore River, the sole institution created in the south by Neville to fulfil his assimilationist ambitions was the Home for Girls in Bennett Street, East Perth. Also known at various times as the Native Girls' Home and Bennett House, it accommodated a grand total of twelve girls.[57]

It was a government-owned, five-room house originally built for the head teacher of the local state school, but by 1930 it had fallen into a state of disrepair. Neville appropriated it for his department. He took two years to repair and furnish it with leftovers from other departments, mainly the Lunacy Department and the Immigration Home. He intended it to be a hostel for girls from the Moore River Settlement who went to Perth to be employed as domestic servants in the city. He employed Grace Campbell, the widow of a former superintendent at Moore River, to manage it and give the girls some rudimentary training in the few weeks they stayed there before taking up positions.[58]

The employment scheme emulated the existing program for Aboriginal domestic servants in New South Wales. Neville's secretary, Constance Stitfold, found jobs for the girls in Perth households,

[56] *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs for the Year Ended 30th June 1937*, p 16

[57] Neville, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 14 March 1934, transcript p 133

[58] Neville, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 14 March 1934, transcript p 133; 3 May 1934, transcript p 596

banked their wages in a trust account, and gave each a small amount of pocket money.[59] There are no figures for the number of girls sent to employers from the home but, since Miss Stitfold managed their affairs entirely by herself as well as performing her other duties, there cannot have been many. The Chief Protector's 1931 annual report said 83 girls had been sent out to employment in the previous three years, but this was a combined total of girls who went direct from Moore River as well as those from East Perth. Given their proficiency in the sewing room, more of them would probably have found work in clothing factories than domestic service.[60]

Moreover, not all the beds in the house were used by girls going to domestic service. When the Royal Commissioner Henry Moseley visited it in 1934 he found it was also being used to accommodate girls sent for treatment as outpatients at the Perth Hospital and as a holiday home in the city for domestic servants who worked on country properties.[61] It was also used for stopover accommodation for other girls being transported around the state and who needed brief accommodation in Perth. When the *Rabbit-Proof Fence* girls, Molly, Gracie and Daisy, were on their way from Marble Bar to Moore River in 1931, they stayed there overnight. By 1937–38, when a total of 356 girls stayed there at some time during the twelve-month period, it had become predominantly a short-stay hostel rather than a training institution.[62]

The Home for Girls was Neville's only project for half-castes in the south that could be labelled a success. To say even this is stretching things. The Moseley report offered no more praise than it was 'a useful institution'.[63] Whatever the case, it was a very minor achievement. The minimal number of girls it housed, and the fact that it retained its original purpose for only a few years, means the support it offers those historians who claim Neville was conducting some kind of 'systematic program' of assimilation is negligible.

THE 'SINISTER AIMS' OF SISTER KATE

> Neville's vision of biological absorption was short-lived. He retired in 1940, and subsequent public exposure of Nazi eugenics-based race atrocities undermined support for the policy. Nevertheless his determination to

[59] Jacobs, *Mister Neville*, pp 202–3, 246

[60] *Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for the Year Ended 30th June 1931*, typescript version, p 8

[61] Moseley, *Report of the Royal Commissioner*, p 15; Neville, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 14 March 1934, transcript pp 132–3

[62] Report by Matron, Native Girls Home Perth, in *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs for the Year Ended 30th June 1938*, p 20

[63] Moseley, *Report of the Royal Commissioner*, p 15

> 'make black go white' remained practice at Sister Kate's into the late 1940s, and it left a painful legacy for the children who inadvertently became part of this experiment in social and biological engineering.
>
> — Anna Haebich, 'Clearing the Wheat Belt', 2004[64]

Poor Sister Kate. Academic historians today routinely vilify her name by coupling it with phrases such as 'Nazi race atrocities', 'social and biological engineering' and the like. According to Anna Haebich, her gross offence against human rights was to set up a home for quarter-caste and other fair-skinned part-Aboriginal children in order to assimilate them into white society. Sister Kate was complicit, Haebich says, in Neville's plan for 'breeding out the "coloured race" altogether'.

> [T]he principal aim of Sister Kate's was to *make the children white*. Selected according to criteria of corporeal whiteness, they were submitted to techniques of social engineering to make their minds white as well. As a former resident recalled, 'We went in Aboriginal and we came out white'. The humanitarian rhetoric espoused by authorities at the Home masked these sinister aims and the associated violence to the children and their families, and all became inextricably linked in the fervent claim that this was 'for the children's own good'.[65]

Sister Kate does not deserve such a reputation. The major accusations against her in the above statement are all false. She was not a hypocrite who, under a guise of benevolence, wilfully destroyed intact families in pursuit of a racist agenda. She was an Anglican nun who worked for 40 years in Western Australia housing, feeding, clothing and educating orphans, abandoned babies, destitute and disabled children — only a minority of whom were Aboriginal. She was a critic of impersonal child welfare institutions and created a new model of cottage homes where staff devoted individual love and attention to each child. In her youth she took a vow of poverty and thereafter lived and worked in the same premises as the children she cared for. With minuscule funding from either her church or the state, she raised enough funds herself by organizing charitable associations, meetings, concerts, fetes and making appeals to private donors. Over this time she created three separate establishments for her charges. In the course of her life, she also suffered the indignity of church politics that insensitively and prematurely ousted her from her position. Anna Haebich has defamed a good woman.

Katherine Mary Clutterbuck was born in 1861 and grew up at Bath in the English county of Somerset. She came from a military and

[64] Haebich, 'Clearing the Wheat Belt, p 285

[65] Anna Haebich, *Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families 1800–2000*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle 2000, p 280 (her emphases)

banking family. Her father's mother was a daughter of the economist David Ricardo. At age 22 she joined the Church of England Sisterhood in London and initially trained in nursing and dispensary before being professed a full Sister of St Michael's Convent, Kilburn. For fifteen years she did welfare work in the slums and dockside districts of London and in her order's orphanage at Kilburn. In the late nineteenth century, her order was outward looking and had a focus on education. It saw the British colonies as sites where poor and orphaned English children could, with proper guidance, make something of themselves. It established schools in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Hobart, Dunedin and Christchurch. In 1901, Sister Kate and four other nuns left England bound for Western Australia intent on establishing their order and an accompanying school in Perth. Travelling with them was an entourage of 22 child migrants from the Kilburn orphanage.[66]

By 1903, the sisters had raised enough money through both the church and private donors to buy eighteen acres of land at Parkerville in the Darling Ranges, nineteen miles east of Perth. They employed contractors to build a number of cottages where they and the children could live and conduct their school. By the end of the year the Church of England Orphanage, Parkerville, was in operation. The English orphans were joined by a quickly growing number of abandoned and neglected infants and children found in Perth. It subsequently changed its name to the League of Charity Home for Waifs and Stray Babies. In both church newsletters and the metropolitan press it was often called the Waifs Home but eventually settled on the name by which it was long known, the Parkerville Children's Home. By 1909 Sister Kate had attracted the support of the state Education Department to construct a new brick building on the site where she installed a fully funded public school.

In the 1910s and 1920s the Parkerville home became one of Perth's fashionable charities. Sister Kate proved adept at gaining support from dignitaries like the state's governors, premiers and their wives, who frequently officiated or attended her social and fundraising functions. She was endorsed by the *West Australian* newspaper, which launched fundraising drives for her ('Appeal for One Million Pennies') and wrote editorials urging readers to make donations. She cultivated a number of local writers, including the well-known journalist Muriel Chase, who wrote prolifically about social problems and the state's lack of social welfare services.

[66] Vera Whittington, *Sister Kate: A Life Dedicated to Children in Need of Care*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1999, pp 23–64

There was no doubt about the genuine need at the time for such a residential child welfare and educational institution. Sister Kate's biographer, Vera Whittington, has reproduced details from some of the school's admittance books which revealed the profile of its charges were similar to those found in orphanages and children's homes in the major cities of Britain and eastern Australia: orphans whose parents were dead or unknown; illegitimate children of impoverished or alcoholic single parents; disabled and mentally retarded children; those subject to domestic violence; and children of prostitutes found living in brothels.[67]

During the home's first twenty years, its intake was confined almost entirely to white children. Gradually, a small number of Aboriginal children joined their ranks. By 1920, when it had a total enrolment of 100 children, one report observed 'several baby Aboriginals'. By 1932, when Neville's department asked for information, the home provided a list of 28 Aboriginal children, aged from three to nineteen years, out of its total enrolment of 143. By this time, Neville had begun sending a small number of children under his wardship to Parkerville. However, they always remained a minority and there was nothing racially distinctive about their admittance, since the home also accommodated children of Japanese, Chinese, Maori, Afghan and West Indian ethnicity. Whittington insists:

> Colour or race made no difference to Sister Kate. Any child in need was given a home, and, it seems, neither did the children notice colour or race.[68]

By 1932, Sister Kate had fallen out with the new Perth Anglican Archbishop, Henry Le Fanu. She turned 71 that year and Le Fanu wanted to replace her at Parkerville with younger nuns from his former diocese of Brisbane. Unwilling to retire, she approached journalist Paul Hasluck, then writing a thesis on Aboriginal policy, saying, 'I'm out of a job and I am looking for something to do'. Hasluck urged her to fill the then existing gap in state welfare provisions for part-Aboriginal children:

> I drew her attention to the plight of the light-skinned part-Aboriginal children who had nowhere to go — not classed as Aborigines but not treated as the concern of the Child Welfare Department. White neglected or mistreated children were committed to the care of the state but not these part-Aborigines.[69]

[67] Whittington, *Sister Kate*, pp 116–17
[68] Whittington, *Sister Kate*, pp 192, 276
[69] Paul Hasluck interview with Vera Whittington, 1992, cited by Whittington, *Sister Kate*, p 278

She had enough private support and funds to start a new home, so she wrote to A. O. Neville offering to put herself under his authority:

> I have always been keenly interested in the Halfcastes and Natives & I should very much like to work among them ... We would carry out all suggestions, rules and regulations you gave us, & be open to inspection day or night at any time you wished to send an inspector.[70]

The offer was too good for Neville to refuse. Without any departmental expenditure he would gain an additional institution conducted by a woman with some of the best connections in Perth. It would give the cause of Aboriginal child welfare a far more prominent social standing, and yet he would remain in charge. In their negotiations over the following twelve months, Neville made it clear that he would choose which children would go to the new home and that he would remain their legal guardian. For her part, Sister Kate made her sole criterion for selection equally clear.

> We should of course like to have the most poorest and neglected children, not those who have mothers who love and care for them, but those who are most unwanted in the State. But we must leave that to you.[71]

This remark is from a letter she wrote to Neville in June 1933, and is one of the better known statements in the history of Western Australian Aboriginal welfare. It has been quoted — favourably — by Neville's biographer, Pat Jacobs, and by Sister Kate's biographer, Vera Whittington. Anna Haebich also quotes it, but only to dismiss it as part of the public 'fiction' maintained about Sister Kate's motives over the years.[72] Yet her letter to Neville was a private one and was part of the negotiation of her terms of agreement with his department. She had no reason to disguise her views or to maintain some kind of public façade. She did not want children to be removed from their mothers. The children she wanted were 'the most poorest and neglected'. There is no good reason to doubt the authenticity of what she wrote. The only people with cause to do so are those pre-determined to paint her in terms as unfavourable as possible.

In the event, Neville's realm expanded by two institutions from this arrangement. One was a small seaside cottage at Buckland Hill, south of Cottesloe, owned by Sister Kate, which she retained for the care of infants of less than school age. The other was a five-acre site in the eastern Perth suburb of Queen's Park owned by one of her close

[70] Sister Kate to A. O. Neville, 28 December 1932, cited by Wittington, *Sister Kate*, p 277

[71] Sister Kate to A. O. Neville, 12 June 1933, cited by Jacobs, *Mister Neville*, p 218, and cited by Whittington, *Sister Kate*, p 287

[72] Haebich, *Broken Circles*, p 281

supporters and collaborators, Ruth Lefroy. In May 1934, thanks to a charitable grant from the state's Lotteries Commission, a six-bedroom cottage home was constructed on the Queen's Park site for a new collection of children. All the latter were of school age and were subsequently enrolled in the nearby state school. By the end of the year, each of the homes at Buckland Hill and Queen's Park accommodated eleven children.[73] Sometime between 1935 and 1936, the Buckland Hill cottage ceased to be used and all subsequent children went to Queen's Park.

Neville retained the right to decide which children were sent to the home. There is no doubt that those he chose were of quarter-caste or lesser descent. That was the point of the exercise. Neville sometimes referred to it as 'the quarter-caste home'. He described it as a home 'for the accommodation of those near-white children who were quite out of place in native settlements and who deserved all the facilities, and upbringing usually accorded to white children'.[74] Hence there is no question that it was an exercise in racial preference or, if you like, a form of racial discrimination among those of Aboriginal descent. But in this case, treating some part-Aborigines better than others on the basis of their skin colour was the limit of Neville's crime against humanity. The other charges made by historians against him and Sister Kate over their operation of this little institution are simply bizarre.

The initial group at Queen's Park and Buckland Hill were part-Aboriginal children from the Parkerville Home. Sister Kate took them with her after she resigned. She also told Neville she could accommodate another six children if he could supply them. Neville instructed the superintendent of the Moore River settlement to select the appropriate children. The definition of 'quarter-caste' at the time was usually decided on the rough-and-ready basis of appearance rather than descent, since there was insufficient information about the family history of most children at Moore River to make a precise evaluation. Nonetheless, Anna Haebich has claimed this exercise marked the onset of a large-scale experiment in racial engineering. She said the 'scores of practically white children that could now be moved legally from the camps, using the extended powers of the 1936 Act', were all part of Neville's plans to end the Aboriginal race.[75] Sister Kate's home allegedly became the principal institution favoured by Neville as the conduit between the Aboriginal camps and

[73] Whittington, *Sister Kate*, p 322

[74] *Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for the Year Ended 30th June 1936*, p 16

[75] Haebich, *Broken Circles*, pp 281–2

the absorption of part-Aboriginal children into white society. According to Haebich, Neville told the 1937 conference of Aboriginal administrators in Canberra that most of the children sent to Sister Kate's had been born to domestic servant girls who he had placed in jobs in the white community but who came back pregnant.[76] He removed them from their mothers and placed them in the homes so they would grow up as whites, ignorant of their true background.

Haebich's version of what occurred is a serious misrepresentation. It is true that Neville told the 1937 conference that some of his domestic servant girls did get pregnant on the job and that he removed their children from them. There was nothing especially racist about his action since in those days the same thing also happened routinely to white unmarried teenage mothers. But Neville did *not* tell the conference that most children he sent to Sister Kate's were of this kind. He never mentioned Sister Kate's home in this context at all. This is an interpretation Haebich made to fulfil her far-fetched connection between this nun and Nazi racial policies.

As for the 'scores of practically white children' Neville removed, this is an even greater beat-up. Throughout her lifetime, the number of children enrolled at Sister Kate's home was tiny. In its first decade, 1934 to 1944, the home took in a grand total of 146 children, an average admission of fewer than fifteen a year.[77] To seriously claim this was an exercise in biological engineering to end the Aboriginal race is to lose all sense of proportion. Indeed, Haebich's determination to destroy the reputation of this English nun is obsessive:

> Selected according to criteria of corporeal whiteness, [the children] were submitted to techniques of social engineering to make their minds white as well ... Contact with Aboriginal family members was strictly curtailed. Children were told they were orphans or abandoned by uncaring parents and some grew up not even knowing they were of Aboriginal descent. [78]

The evidence she offers for these assertions came from interviews with former inmates conducted in 1995 by the Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia. For instance:

> We were inculcated into a Christian religion and my Aboriginal culture and history was non-existent ... The fact is that our Aboriginality was never mentioned, it was never a consideration.[79]

[76] Haebich, *Broken Circles*, p 281
[77] *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs for the Year Ended 30th June 1944*, p 12
[78] Haebich, *Broken Circles*, pp 280, 285
[79] Haebich, *Broken Circles*, pp 284–5

> [T]hey never prepared us for the fact that we had to one day leave the home and go into the outside world and deal with the fact that we were Aboriginal ... We were being brought up as whites to live in a white society.[80]

However, other interviews conducted by biographer Vera Whittington told a different story. Most children knew very well they were Aboriginal and many knew why they were in the home. Others maintained contact with the few Aboriginal relatives they had. For instance, one of the first children at Queen's Park recalled:

> I was three or four years old when I was taken from the cattle station ... My mother had died. My father was working on the station but was often away. My extended family — my maternal grandfather — looked after me. Father could not read or write properly and probably we would not have been able to either. So, in a way, I suppose it was quite the best thing for us to have been taken.[81]

One boy who was sent from Moore River to Queen's Park told Whittington that some children were quite capable of re-connecting with their Aboriginal relatives and it was untrue that the home disallowed visits by parents and relatives. Although Neville's travel restrictions made it difficult, his relatives still came to see him there.

> My mother died when I was a few months old, my Aunt looked after me ... I was a proper orphan ... Sister Kate was just a wonderful person. She was such an anchor, especially to a kid like me. There were some like me, but some had brothers and sisters and later on they were able to find their mothers and fathers. I was lucky because my aunties and uncles used to come down, see. That was one good thing.[82]

Any collection of interviews with former inmates of children's homes, black or white, is likely to find radically different remembrances of experiences and contradictory accounts of what went on. But a balanced history would try to tell all sides of the story. In *Broken Circles*, Haebich omitted any recollections like the above that did not support the conclusion she wanted.

The mundane truth was that the position Sister Kate's home filled in Perth's child welfare infrastructure was the one originally suggested to her by Paul Hasluck in 1933. At that time, Perth had an extensive network of largely church-run orphanages and other institutions for neglected and disturbed children, but none of them would accept children who might be Aboriginal, whatever their degree of descent, because they were considered Neville's responsibility. But he had no

[80] Haebich, *Broken Circles*, p 286
[81] Interview with Sara Van de Berg in Whittington, *Sister Kate*, p 415
[82] Interview with Ken Colbung in Whittington, *Sister Kate*, p 422

satisfactory place to house them. All he had was the Moore River Settlement, which was largely an institution for destitute families and their offspring, and which could take in very few additional, unattached children of any shade. What was true in practice in 1933 became also true in law in 1936 when quarter-caste children who did not associate with Aborigines were no longer classed under the Act as 'natives', and hence could not legally be placed in any institution for half-caste or full-blood people.

Hasluck, who as a federal politician and Governor-General, had been a patron of the Sister Kate home for many years, maintained his original explanation of their founding all his life. In 1972, he told a gathering of one-time inmates: 'They couldn't get into the ordinary orphanages, they couldn't even go back to the Aboriginal settlement.' Quoting this speech, Haebich claims Hasluck was speaking 'insensitively and mistakenly'.[83] But Neville also offered the same explanation long before. His 1936 annual report said the existence of the homes gave comfort to both the department and to many young mothers who 'felt their children were out of place in a native settlement and yet who formerly had no hope of placing them elsewhere'.[84]

While Neville was usually driven to exaggerate his achievements in reports and speeches, he did not do so in this case. If he really had created an institution that he thought might deliver his long-term policy objective of breeding out the colour, he would have crowed about it. The fact he did not do so about Sister Kate's home is telling. There is no good reason for Haebich to prefer a vast racist conspiracy to the perfectly plausible explanations of those who took the principal decisions at the time.

THE GREAT ROUND-UP OF HALF-CASTES AT MOOLA BULLA

> We were taken away to Moola Bulla settlement. That's a government settlement just out of Hall's Creek, Moola Bulla. They picked up all the half-caste kids from all over the east Kimberley area and the west Kimberley area and put them all in that settlement. The truth is there must have been about five-hundred kiddies, half-caste boys and females. They were picked up from all the cattle stations around this area, and even the towns, any half-caste kids. They didn't care much for the full blood, only for the half breed. Anyone that had a bit of colour was put in there.

[83] Haebich, *Broken Circles*, p 281

[84] *Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for the Year Ended 30th June 1936*, p 16

— Alfie Gerrard, interview by Bruce Shaw about events in 1937 [85]

If the Australian history profession had a practice of fact-checking even half as good as the average tabloid newspaper, the above passage would never have been published. It comes from *Australians 1938*, one of the bicentenary volumes produced in 1988. The eleven volumes in the series were planned, written and edited by academic historians, and designed as a showpiece of the profession. The volume *Australians 1938* was edited by Bill Gammage of the University of Adelaide and Peter Spearritt of Macquarie University. Several of its chapters, including three on the Stolen Generations, derive from information collected through the Australia 1938 Oral History Project, an exercise funded by the Australian Research Grants Scheme, the Australian National University, Macquarie University and the National Library of Australia. Unfortunately, what this expensive project demonstrated most clearly was the risk of relying uncritically on oral history.

Had the editors done their job properly, they would have looked for confirmation of the more dramatic evidence, such as Alfie Gerrard's claim above that *all* the half-caste children in the Kimberley, a total of 500, were rounded-up in the late 1930s and placed on Moola Bulla station. Had they taken the trouble, Gammage and Spearritt would have found that not only was it impossible for Moola Bulla to accommodate and feed that many people of *any* age group, but at that time, in the whole of the Kimberley district, there were not 500 half-caste children to remove. Had the editors bothered to check the standard history of Aboriginal policy in Western Australia by Peter Biskup, they would have found the total part-Aboriginal population in the Kimberley at the time — adults *and* children — was itself only 500.[86] Had they consulted the more obvious primary sources, such as the 1935 report of Royal Commissioner Henry Moseley, they would have seen that Moola Bulla station then accommodated only 200 mostly full-blood Aboriginal people. Only 40 of them were children. By 1938, twelve months after the purported great round-up, the department's annual report recorded the total number of children there had grown to just 61.[87] The numbers in the annual reports were confirmed by the department's annual accounts. The department knew well how many children were there because it provided the

[85] 'Alfie Gerrard talks to Bruce Shaw', in Bill Gammage and Peter Spearritt, eds, *Australians 1938*, Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, Sydney, 1987, p 55

[86] Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, p 162

[87] Moseley, *Report of the Royal Commissioner*, p 13; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs for the Year Ended June 30th 1938*, pp 17, 31

rations and school payments for each of them. In 1937 it spent £29 6 10 on 'maintenance of half-caste children and school fees'; in 1938 it spent £38 13 6 on the same account.[88] Moreover, there is no defence available to the editors of *Australians 1938* on the grounds that Alfie Gerrard did not understand the European system of counting and hence was not wilfully misrepresenting what happened. That might have been true, but the editors did not see fit to warn their readers that his notion of what was meant by '500' was unreliable. *Australians 1938* was published for a European audience and the total of 500 stolen children was clearly intended by its editors to be taken at face value.

In *Bringing Them Home*, the Human Rights Commission based its own account of Moola Bulla on the same kind of unreliable and exaggerated oral history. It quoted testimony from two informants, both anonymous. The report did not even bother to say what years its informants were discussing. Evidence of such standard cannot prove anything, but *Bringing Them Home* thought it persuasive enough to reproduce.

> The welfare just grabbed you where they found you. They'd take them in threes and fours, whatever. The Native Welfare blokes used to come to every station and see where our half-caste kids were. They used to drive down to Port Hedland. Our people would hide us, paint us with charcoal. I was taken to Moola Bulla.[89]

As I noted earlier, under Neville's regime from 1915 to 1940, he never engaged 'native welfare blokes' to do this kind of work. His sole travelling inspector was employed only from 1925 to 1930 but was far too busy with other duties to make more work for himself by driving about the state looking for half-caste children to remove. In other words, Aboriginal claims that in the 1930s there was some kind of mass roundup of all the half-caste children in the Kimberley to Moola Bulla or anywhere else, are pure invention.

The historian Anna Haebich is equally unreliable about this settlement. In her book *Broken Circles* she claimed: 'Children continued to be sent from the east Kimberley to Forrest River Mission until 1930 when Moola Bulla was declared an institution for 'half-caste' children.'[90] In fact, throughout its existence, Moola Bulla's inhabitants

[88] *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs for the Year Ended June 30th 1937*, p 28; *for the Year Ended June 30th 1938*, p 31

[89] *Bringing Them Home*, p 108

[90] Haebich, *Broken Circles*, p 245. Although Haebich wrote a great deal about the Kimberley in this book, she could not have consulted all the major primary research sources because she did not know of the existence of the government station for Aborigines, Munja, on the Walcott Inlet. Originally

were predominantly full-blood adult Aborigines. In his 1938 report, the manager of the station, A. T. Woodland, said it accommodated an average of 189 people per month, most were adults and only 48 were 'other than full-bloods'.[91] The only place on the settlement where half-caste children were in a majority was the school.

Located near Halls Creek in the East Kimberley district, Moola Bulla was created by the Western Australian government in 1910 when it resumed 28 pastoral leases to create a one-million acre cattle station. Urged on by a lobby of local pastoralists, the government hoped that by providing a site where Aborigines could be given freshly slaughtered meat, they would cease their random spearing of the pastoralists' cattle. The plan worked. Cattle killing declined dramatically. The government paid for the station by what it saved from the former policy of capturing, prosecuting and jailing offenders. The purpose of the station was not the assimilation of the local Aborigines. Nonetheless, the government hoped it would develop into a self-supporting institution that employed Aborigines to raise cattle and sheep. The local Aborigines were free to come and go as they chose, but most showed they were not interested in this form of employment, treating Moola Bulla as a seasonal feeding station rather than somewhere to settle down and work.[92]

However, after 1929 when the wife of the European storekeeper began teaching the children in her spare time, a demand from Aboriginal parents for more education led the government to set up a school there. 'The children are eager to learn,' Neville reported, 'and the pastoralists have shown their interest in the scheme by encouraging others from the surrounding districts to attend.'[93] Two other similar but smaller government stations were established in the Kimberley at Munja, on the coast at Walcott Inlet, and at Violet Valley, near Turkey Creek in the East Kimberley, but neither of the latter two settlements had a school.

Moola Bulla does not deserve the reputation it has been given in the historical literature. It operated as an Aboriginal station from 1910

called Avon Valley, it was founded in 1926 and was described in detail in the 1935 report of the Royal Commissioner Henry Moseley (pp 4, 13–14) and discussed in every annual report of A. O. Neville from 1926 to 1938. Munja is not only missing from Haebich's text but also from her table of institutions on pp 228–9. Nor does she mention the settlement under the name of Avon Valley.

[91] *Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs for the Year Ended 30th June 1938*, p 17

[92] Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, pp 100–1

[93] *Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for the Year Ended 30th June 1932*, typescript, p 22

to 1955 and, because it solved the cattle-killing problem, was one of the very few successes of the policy initiatives of that era. Not only was there was no compulsion for Aborigines to stay there, but their children were not confined in any way. *Bringing Them Home* misleads its readers yet again by saying of all these government settlements: 'The parents rightly feared that their children would be placed in segregated dormitories if the family moved to a settlement.'[94] Neither Moola Bulla, nor Munja, nor Violet Valley had dormitories for children in this period.[95] Moola Bulla got dormitories for boys and girls only after Neville retired in 1940.[96] Until then, the only dormitory on a government settlement was at Moore River.

The one possible charge of racial inequity that could be brought against this institution was that the Moola Bulla school discriminated in favour of half-caste children. By 1934, some 40 children attended the school, and this remained the average number for the decade.[97] About one quarter of children were full-bloods, but three-quarters were half-castes.[98] This was in a territory where half-castes constituted a small minority, about 3 per cent of the total Aboriginal population of 15,000. The Moseley Royal Commission, which held hearings at Moola Bulla in June 1934, said the school's main aim was to educate the half-caste children. Moseley's report described this initiative as a progressive move for the region. '[U]nlike the private properties, Moola Bulla takes an interest in the elementary education of half-caste children, and that in listening to the manager one hears perhaps more of the training of the native than one would hear from the management of a private property.'

However, the elementary education provided was not followed up with vocational training because the station had no technical facilities. Moseley said it would never become a properly equipped settlement until these were provided.[99] The station's greatest failing, he thought, was that it offered its half-castes too little chance of social mobility: 'It is right, above all, that the half-caste child should be given the greatest opportunity of fitting himself or herself for a higher station of life than

[94] *Bringing Them Home*, p 106

[95] Angus Woodland, manager, Moola Bulla, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 11 June 1934, transcript pp 86–7.

[96] Hilary Rumley and Sandy Toussaint, 'Policy and Practice at Moola Bulla', *Aboriginal History*, 14, 1–2, 1990, p 95

[97] Neville, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 12 March 1934, transcript p 15; Annual Reports of the Chief Protector, and of the Commissioner of Natives Affairs, 1932–44

[98] *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs for the Year Ended 30th June 1938*, p 18

[99] Moseley, *Report of the Royal Commissioner*, p 13

that provided in a native camp: so far no means are apparent of enabling this to be done.'[100]

After the passing of the 1936 Native Administration Act, Neville appears to have had more ambitious plans for half-caste children at the site. In his two subsequent annual reports, he spoke of their rapidly increasing numbers. In 1938 he said he soon expected its 61 children to grow to 100, 'due to the compulsory accommodation there of increasing numbers of half-caste children'.[101] However, nothing came of his plan. The school was closed down in 1938 for want of teachers and only re-opened a year later when Neville finally recruited a married couple of Presbyterian missionaries. The dormitory that opened in 1940 was short-lived. The onset of World War II and the subsequent shortage of labour in the north attracted many residents away from the settlement and into employment. In 1943 the school was closed down once more and the remaining 'unattached' children relocated to the Beagle Bay Mission.[102] In 1948, a state government report condemned the settlement as a place unfit for either welfare or education:

> To refer to Moola Bulla as a native institution in its present run-down state would be palpably absurd ... The lack of institutional buildings is as extraordinary as it is regrettable, not even a school-room or a dining room existing.[103]

The most that could be said about the Western Australian authorities' ambitions for half-caste children over this period was that they wanted them to have the chance to join the modern world, as long at it did not cost much. As a young journalist, Paul Hasluck accompanied the Moseley Royal Commission when it held hearings in the north of the state. Hasluck described the contemporary approach to half-caste children as an informal, hit-or-miss affair, aimed principally at giving the individual child a better chance in life. By this time, most half-castes in the north were born to half-caste couples themselves who worked for wages on pastoral stations (not government stations), who lived in their own houses and who made their own provisions for their children's education at local public or convent schools. At the other extreme was the half-caste born in a bush camp to an Aboriginal mother and an unknown white father. Only the latter were the targets of the state's welfare system. Hasluck wrote:

[100] Moseley, *Report of the Royal Commissioner*, p 13
[101] *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs for the Year Ended 30th June 1938*, p 17
[102] Rumley and Toussaint, 'Policy and Practice at Moola Bulla', pp 94–5
[103] Bateman Report, 1948, cited by Rumley and Toussaint, 'Policy and Practice at Moola Bulla', p 96

> When such a child was born the chances were that not much notice would be taken of it at first. Generally, however, when the child had grown up to seven or ten years of age and had become noticeable because of its lighter colour a station manager or someone else in authority would begin to feel some concern and might draw the attention of the local police constable or Protector to the boy or girl on one of his visits. Then, after some correspondence to and from the Chief Protector in Perth, an instruction might be given to the constable to move the child to a government settlement or a mission. Sometimes, particularly if the half-caste was a boy, no-one bothered and he stayed in the camp and grew up a blackfellow.
>
> Official policy was not clearly discernible but seemed to be to lift the half-caste children out of 'the black's camp' with the idea of 'giving them a chance'. I estimated the total of half-caste children in the Kimberleys as 327, of whom 188 were of school age and out of those 152 were enrolled in schools on settlements, missions and in the towns. To that extent the half-caste child was being 'given a chance'.[104]

This account is far more credible, and demonstrates a far-greater sensitivity to local conditions, than the portrait in *Bringing Them Home*. As Hasluck emphasized, the numbers who got the chance to go to schools at government stations, missions and towns was very small. To remind readers just how crude in comparison is the analysis of the Human Rights Commission, let me quote its version of the purportedly single-minded bureaucratic process in operation on government settlements like Moola Bulla.

> Neville saw the settlements as a means of integrating children of mixed descent into the non-indigenous society. They were to be physically separated from their families on the settlements, receive a European education, be trained in domestic and stock work and then sent out to approved work situations. Between jobs they would return to the settlements. Neville theorized that this process would lead to their acceptance by non-indigenous people and their own loss of identification as Indigenous people.[105]

The confidence of this passage was quite misplaced. It uncritically accepted that whatever Neville planned, he could make happen. In contrast, Hasluck observed that sending half-caste children to elementary school on a government station or mission altered the real life chances of very few. Rather than being removed to Perth to lead some radically different 'non-indigenous' life, most of the half-castes in the north remained in the pastoral industry, living and working close to where they were born. It was hard to generalize about them, Hasluck said, but

[104] Hasluck, *Shades of Darkness*, p 51
[105] *Bringing Them Home*, p 105

> there were half-caste stockmen and other station workers employed and living on the same terms as whites, some other half-caste stockmen employed on the same terms and conditions as Aborigines, and, here and there, semi-civilized mission-trained half-castes who had 'gone back to the bush' and who did not seem acceptable to either white or black.[106]

In other words, 'giving a chance' to the small number of half-caste children in the northern pastoral industry could never have amounted to the kind of 'massive exercise of social engineering' that *Bringing Them Home* and academic historians have imagined. The elementary schooling provided by the government taught them to read, write and count, but not much more. At most, it gave some the ability to get the slightly better class of jobs offered on pastoral stations. It is impossible to seriously portray Moola Bulla or the other two government stations in the north as sites for the destruction of Aboriginal identity.

HOW MANY CHILD REMOVALS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA?

All up, then, how many children were removed from their parents and placed in both state institutions and religious missions in Western Australia? Like anyone who accuses others of a serious crime, those who make the accusation of genocide have the onus on them to put up some credible evidence about the scale of the offence. In 1996, relying upon advice from historians and other social researchers, the Western Australian government's submission to the Human Rights Commission enquiry claimed there was 'not one' Aboriginal family in the state that had escaped the effects of removal policies. Anna Haebich thought this claim carried sufficient weight to quote it in her history of the Stolen Generations, *Broken Circles*.[107] However, she completely avoided providing any statistics or estimates herself, preferring instead to give reasons why she could *not* give an answer.

> We can never know the exact number of children of Aboriginal descent removed from their families in Western Australia. While the Aborigines Department ran an efficient record system based on personal dossiers from the early 1920s, little accurate statistical data was collected ... Missions and other institutions were required to send in reports of numbers of children subsidized by the Aborigines Department but did not always enumerate children paid for by the mission or their parents. Furthermore, numbers were not reported in a regular or consistent fashion in the Aborigines Department annual reports.[108]

[106] Hasluck, *Shades of Darkness*, p 50
[107] Haebich, *Broken Circles*, p 228
[108] Haebich, *Broken Circles*, p 228

Instead, Haebich adopted probably the most counterfeit tactic in this entire debate. She produced a two-page list of institutions, saying: 'the extent of removals can be surmised from the large number of institutions taking in Aboriginal children relative to the size of the Aboriginal population'.[109] Her list, which purported to be of institutions 'providing care for Aboriginal children and youth in Western Australia from 1942–1960s', was headed: 'Chronology of Aboriginal Children's Institutions'. Her list was not just misleading, it was completely bogus. The great majority of institutions in it were not 'children's institutions' at all.

Haebich's list contained the names of 72 institutions.[110] The great majority of them — 65 on my count — housed adults as well as children. In short, 90 per cent of her institutions were ring-ins. Some were *primarily* for adults and some rarely housed children at all. Among them were the better-known government stations and mission communities (Carrolup, Moore River, Moola Bulla, New Norcia, Beagle Bay, Mount Margaret, Forrest River) which, as I demonstrate in this and the next chapter, were established primarily to provide services to Aborigines of all ages. Her list includes an institution she called 'La Grange, West Kimberley' which purportedly opened in 1924 under the auspices of the Catholic Church. There was no such place. Before the Second World War, the only establishment for Aborigines at La Grange Bay was what the Chief Protector's annual reports called the 'La Grange Feeding Depot', whose name accurately described its sole purpose. Haebich's list even included the Derby leprosarium, as if the government would have established such an institution to house stolen children.

Why publish such a list? Haebich obviously felt the need to make the total number of stolen children appear to be large. She tried to show that church and state between them constructed enough institutions to house a very high proportion of the Aboriginal children in the state. But the actual data she found in the government and mission reports told an embarrassingly different story. For the entire history of Western Australia, the number of children in institutions at any one time was an insignificant proportion of the Aboriginal population. Indeed, the real numbers themselves were quite sufficient on their own to undermine the Stolen Generations thesis. Rather than acknowledge this, Haebich drew up a list of institutions she hoped would convey a different impression.

So, how many Aboriginal children in Western Australia really were placed in institutions? In Table 8.1 in this chapter, and in Table 9.1 in

[109] Haebich, *Broken Circles*, p 228
[110] Haebich, Broken Circles, pp 229–30

the chapter following, I give the figures at one typical point in time, 1932–34. Western Australian government stations and other institutions accommodated 212 children; religious missions accommodated 397 children — a total of 609. At that time, according to the Moseley Royal Commission, the state had a population of 19,000 Aboriginal people in the settled districts, and an estimated 10,000 still beyond the point of contact. That meant in the settled districts alone, children in institutions accounted for only 3 per cent of the Aboriginal population. If we assume about 40 per cent of the total population were children, then those in institutions were still only 8 per cent of all Aboriginal children — in other words, 92 per cent were *not* in institutions. This is, I emphasise, a snapshot for one two-year period only. There are no data for how long, on average, children spent at such places. Nonetheless, whichever way you look at it, the claim by both Anna Haebich and the Human Rights Commission that *not one* Aboriginal family in Western Australia escaped the removal policies could not possibly be true. At any one time, there was only a fraction of the number of places needed at state institutions and missions to hold them all.

Let me emphasize, finally, that the number of children in Western Australian institutions cannot be seen as a measure of the Stolen Generations. As this chapter and the following one argue, the great majority of these children were accompanied onto government settlements and religious missions by their parents, or at least one of their parents. Among them, the proportion of 'unattached' children, or those without any parent at all, was only a fraction of the total. Table 8.2 records that in the twenty-five years of A. O. Neville's administration from 1915 to 1940, Moore River enrolled only 252 unattended children. And of these latter children, the evidence shows they were not forcibly removed from loving families but were either orphans or those suffering the same kind of problems as white children institutionalized at the same time and for the same reasons: destitution, neglect, malnourishment, chronic disease and sexual exploitation. Unfortunately for all the children in this position, the small amount of money voted for their care demonstrated how little the Western Australian authorities sought to intervene in Aboriginal affairs. The claim by academic historians and television scriptwriters that these efforts amounted to a massive exercise in social engineering would have left the politicians responsible completely bemused at how anyone could get it so wrong.

CHAPTER NINE

Sex, disease and missionaries in Western Australia

IN 1900, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Western Australia, Matthew Gibney, travelled to Beagle Bay, north of Broome, to inspect the mission conducted by the German order of Pallottine monks. During the visit, he officiated at the wedding ceremony of a 9-year-old girl to an old Aboriginal man. At the time, the strategy of the monks was to bring Christianity to the Aborigines but to do this with as little disruption to the customs and beliefs of the tribes as possible. This meant they accepted a number of aspects of traditional Aboriginal culture, especially polygamy, child brides and the consummation of such marriages, which in any other society would have broken all their moral codes. On this visit, Bishop Gibney was accompanied by the English writer Daisy Bates. In her manuscript *The Native Tribes of Western Australia*, Bates described the wedding, observing that the subjection of such physically immature girls to sexual intercourse and pregnancy meant they often did not live long:

> A very young girl who appeared to be little more than a child of nine years of age was married by the Bishop to a grey old man, apparently old enough to be her grandfather. I questioned the humanity of such an act, and was referred to the girl's mother, who told me that not only had her daughter reached the age of puberty reckoned by native custom, but although several younger men wanted her, she herself had set her affections on the old man and would have no other. The couple shortly after-

> wards left the Mission, and went to Derby (on the coast of King Sound) where the young wife died in her first year of marriage.[1]

Although the Pallottines deferred to Aboriginal values in these matters, the fact that traditional culture approved of sex with children disturbed virtually all the Europeans who encountered it, especially when they found it not a rare occurrence but common. It became a major motive behind their attempts to remove girls vulnerable to such conditions. In his 1906 annual report, the Chief Protector Henry Prinsep explained why he removed a 5-year-old half-caste girl, Polly, from the upper Fitzroy River district. The local postmaster and telegraph operator, C. J. Annear, had sent the following message about the girl:

> A few days ago she was out with the old woman, Mary Ann, when a bush black took her away for two nights during which time the blacks here said he made use of her. Such actions as that of Polly and the man are very common among the natives.[2]

In his reports in 1900 about prostitution at La Grange Bay, south of Broome, what most concerned the local postmaster F. W. Tuckett was how very young many of the girls were, and how some were forced into the trade by their own parents. He drew attention to 'the ravishing of native girls of extremely tender years':

> [Some of] the girls are not ten years of age and they have been cohabiting with Asiatics for many months ... Amongst the girls referred to are 2 or 3 half-castes. These of course command a very high price and enable the mother and so called father to live without any exertion whatever on the proceeds of tucker etc. received in the creeks fortnightly where from 20 to 40 boats come in for wood and water.[3]

When the first missions were established in the Kimberley, their most publicly expressed concern was the abuse of Aboriginal women and children by Asian lugger crews. The Trappist monk Father

[1] Daisy Bates, *The Native Tribes of Western Australia*, edited by Isobel White, National Library of Australia, Canberra, 1985, p 127. Bishop Gibney was Matthew Gibney, Catholic Bishop of Western Australia, who accompanied Bates on her visit. The mission's policy at the time was to abide by native customs of this kind.

[2] Aborigines Department, *Report for the Financial Year Ending 30th June 1906*, p 8. Polly figured in Prinsep's report the following year, pp 8–9. She had been first sent to the settlement at La Grange Bay and then on to the Salvation Army Home at Collie near Perth, 'where she is progressing satisfactorily'.

[3] Tuckett to Prinsep, 16 June 1900, cited by Christine Choo, *Mission Girls: Aboriginal Women on Catholic Missions in the Kimberley, Western Australia, 1900–1950*, University of Western Australia Press, Crawley, 2001, p 123

Nicholas Emo condemned the procurement of Aboriginal women 'for immoral purposes by the Asiatiques' as being more cruel than actual physical ill-treatment.[4] The missionaries were most concerned about half-caste girls who they considered were in the greatest danger of corruption, since both Asian and European men regarded them as more desirable sexual partners than their full-blood counterparts.[5]

By the late 1920s, even though the Kimberley missionaries thought prostitution was in decline following a reduction in the number of visiting pearling vessels, they still wanted young half-caste girls to be sent to Beagle Bay for their own protection. But, because they sought to disrupt traditional culture as little as possible, all they did about the prostitution of full-blood girls was look on in despair. In 1929, the Benedictine monks at the Drysdale River Mission on the north Kimberley coast were still appalled by Aboriginal fathers prostituting their daughters:

> A number of Walmbis arrived, among them N. with his young daughter. She wants to stay here, but we sent her back to the camp with her father, who was expecting us to give him food and tobacco on her account. We told him to get all that from the old man he had chosen for her husband. Both he and the husband have been trafficking with her in a big way, we are told ... She is attached to the mission, but must go wherever the father calls her. If only we had Sisters [nuns], she and the other girls could be saved from this life of perdition! We can only lament their absence, and continue to put up with a life of corruption.[6]

This chapter examines missionary concerns of this kind and their influence on government welfare policy in Western Australia in the early twentieth century, together with a short history of missionary activity in the remote north and east of the state at the same time. These were the last frontiers of Australian white settlement where tribal Aborigines still constituted the great majority of the population. Officials in the 1930s estimated there were about 10,000 full-blood Aborigines in the Kimberley and another 10,000 'bush natives' in the unsettled desert regions of Western Australia.[7] These were regions where traditional society survived until as late as World War II.

[4] Choo, *Mission Girls*, p 104
[5] Choo, *Mission Girls*, p 129
[6] Eugene Perez, *Kalumburu: The Benedictine Mission and the Aborigines 1908–1975*, Kalumburu Benedictine Mission, Wyndham, 1977, pp 85–6
[7] Henry Doyle Moseley, *Report of the Royal Commissioner Appointed to Investigate, Report and Advise Upon Matters in Relation to the Condition and Treatment of Aborigines*, Government Printer, Perth, 1935, p 3

SEXUALITY AND PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERNS IN THE KIMBERLEY

In Western Australia, the authorities were disturbed not only by the age at which Aboriginal children were being led into sexual relations but the diseases they thereby contracted. This was a major issue brought before the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Conditions in Western Australia in 1904 conducted by Walter Roth. It informed Aboriginal policy for decades after. Evidence to the commission revealed the Kimberley district was the site of major outbreaks of sexually-transmitted disease that had a fatal impact on the local Aboriginal population.

Richard Wace, the district magistrate and resident medical officer at Derby told the Roth commission of 14- and 15-year-old girls 'who have only just arrived at maturity and in perfect health' being sent by their tribes as prostitutes to the lugger crews of the pearling industry and returning with venereal disease. 'One of the main reasons of the dying out of the black race is the fact that, through prostitution, the women become infertile.'[8] Constable Bertram Fletcher of La Grange Bay, south of Broome, who described his duties as 'protecting the natives and keeping immorality down', told the Roth commission that of the 400 Aborigines within his patrol, one quarter of them had venereal disease, all contracted from the pearling boats. Of one group of 30 badly infected Aborigines, seventeen or eighteen of them, mostly young women, had recently died.[9] Graham Blick, the district medical officer at Broome, was concerned that Aboriginal boys as young as ten and twelve were being indentured onto pearling boats.[10] Commissioner Roth reported the 'greater evil' was that the Malay crews introduced to the local tribes 'a certain vice peculiar to the Mahometan', a thinly veiled reference to homosexual pederasty of the lugger boys.[11]

Almost everyone who reported on Aboriginal affairs from the Kimberley told how widespread prostitution had become. In another of his reports on the trade at La Grange Bay in 1904, postmaster Tuckett described the graphic scene at Cowan Creek, where pearling boats regularly moored:

> Scores of natives young and old gins intermingled with Asiatics around the boats — on the sandhills many elaborate beds were spread out where ... many Asiatics slept with native women last night and waiting ready for

[8] Walter Edmund Roth, *Report of the Royal Commission on the Condition of the Natives, Western Australia, 1905*, in *Votes and Proceedings of the Parliament*, Western Australia, Second Session, Fifth Parliament, 1905, Volume 1, p 114
[9] Roth, *Report of the Royal Commission*, p 86
[10] Roth, *Report of the Royal Commission*, p 64
[11] Roth, *Report of the Royal Commission*, p 11

> repetition tonight. A white man caused a tremendous scatter probably being taken for a policeman. He estimates over 50 natives principally gins were camped ashore with Asiatics. There is not the slightest doubt same state of affairs existed at all other creeks last night and will doubtless take place again tonight unless constable succeeds in making a raid at one of the creeks.[12]

Scenes of this kind existed along the Kimberley coast from the late nineteenth century and remained an endemic feature of the pearling industry until its decline in the 1920s. Tuckett, like almost all the government's early local protectors and travelling inspectors, linked prostitution to the spread of disease.

> Of course, the main disease — Venerral — is ever on the increase and must continue too do so as long as the present immorality between Asiatics and Natives exist and this is really the most important question there is to grapple with ... the time has arrived for some stringent action to be taken.[13]

It was for this reason that Western Australia's Aborigines Act of 1905 specifically included two clauses designed to prevent Aboriginal women and girls from contact with the pearling fleet:

> 40. Any female aboriginal who, between sunset and sunrise, is found within two miles of any creek or inlet used by the boats of pearlers or other sea boats shall be guilty of an offence against this Act.
>
> 41. Any aboriginal who, being the parent or having custody of any female child apparently under the age of sixteen years, allows that child to be within two miles of any creek or inlet used by the boats of pearlers or other sea boats shall be guilty of an offence against this Act.[14]

Although the policing of prostitution on the Kimberley coast proved beyond the resources of the government, the concerns of these officials were not misplaced. At the time, the greatest threat to the lives of the Aborigines of the Kimberley and North-West districts were infectious diseases that originated in Asia and to which they had little immunity. Spread by contacts between Asian pearlers and trepang fishermen and the Kimberley and North-West tribes, these diseases devastated the indigenous population. The worst was smallpox. In 1866 Malay trepang fishermen brought smallpox that infected the tribes in the vicinity of Beagle Bay and Camden Harbour in the

[12] Tuckett to Prinsep, 24 November 1904, cited by Choo, *Mission Girls*, pp 109–10

[13] Tuckett to Prinsep, 16 June 1900, cited by Choo, *Mission Girls*, p 105, (all his spelling)

[14] Western Australia, 14 of 1905, *An Act to Make Provision for the Better Protection and Care of the Aboriginal inhabitants of Western Australia*

Kimberley. The disease quickly became an epidemic and spread south to Roebuck Bay and the Pilbara. By 1869–70 it had reached Geraldton in the south and East Pilbara inland. Several tribes lost more than half their populations.[15] Other virulent diseases known at the time to have been brought by Asian seamen and goldminers were hookworm and leprosy. Serious outbreaks of both infections were widely reported among northern Aborigines in the decade 1910–20.[16] As a result, the government established leprosariums at Broome, Derby and Roebourne in Western Australia and on islands offshore Darwin and the Kimberley coast.

From the Roth inquiry and the 1905 legislation onwards, the biggest single issue in Aboriginal policy in Western Australia from the point of view of departmental activity was health policy. It remained a central concern for the next several decades and, more than any other expenditure item, dominated A. O. Neville's long tenure as Chief Protector.

Even James Isdell, who, as discussed below, has become the most notorious of the state's child-removing travelling inspectors, wrote at greater length in his reports under the subheading 'Immorality and Disease' than he did about the removal of half-caste children.[17] In 1909 he reported that since the 1905 Aborigines Act had banned cohabitation between white men and Aboriginal women, that practice had become rare. However, sexual relations between Aboriginal women and the Asian crewmen of pearling luggers still remained the 'worst feature' of the Kimberley coast. Isdell was reporting on the incidence of venereal disease he found on his tour of the West Kimberley district where up to 15 per cent of the population was infected.[18] In other words, the travelling inspector's role as a local protector of the Aborigines contained a legitimate concern about the incidence and spread of sexually transmitted disease.

Indeed, reading the annual reports that survive from Neville's administration, one is struck by how much space they devoted to health care, native hospitals and leprosariums, and how little to removing children. For example, in both 1928 and 1935, Neville's

[15] Judy Campbell, *Invisible Invaders: Smallpox and Other Diseases in Aboriginal Australia 1780–1880*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2002, pp 191–214

[16] Gordon Briscoe, *Counting Health and Identity: A History of Aboriginal Health and Demography in Western Australia and Queensland 1900–1940*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2003, pp 125–9, 152–62

[17] Report by Travelling Protector James Isdell to Chief Protector, in *Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for the Year Ending 30th June 1909*, p 9

[18] Peter Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens: The Aboriginal Problem in Western Australia 1898–1954*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1973, p 112

annual reports each devoted more than two pages or 240 lines of text to Aboriginal health compared to eight lines and six lines, respectively, to removals of both children and adults. The longest sections of his annual report were *never* about the removal of children. Public health policy was always the greater motivator of government concern. It is very difficult to reconcile this with the purported objective of eliminating the Aboriginal race.

THE EXTENT OF KIMBERLEY CHILD REMOVALS IN THE 1900S

> I am convinced from my own experience and knowledge that the short-lived grief of the parent is of little consequence compared with the future of the children. The half-caste is intellectually above the aborigine, and it is the duty of the State that they be given a chance to lead a better life than their mothers. I would not hesitate for one moment to separate any half-caste from its aboriginal mother, no matter how frantic her momentary grief might be at the time. They soon forget their offspring.
>
> —James Isdell, travelling inspector and Aboriginal protector, 1909[19]

This is one of the most notorious statements in the debate over the Stolen Generations. It was reproduced by the *Bringing Them Home* report, as well as in books by Henry Reynolds, Anna Haebich and Christine Choo, and in various other works.[20] It is from a report by the Western Australian government's travelling inspector and Aboriginal protector, James Isdell, of his observations in 1909 of the number of half-caste children living in the Kimberley district between Fitzroy Crossing and the coast. Of all the claims by historians about government officials who had intentions to remove children for racial reasons, Isdell is probably their best candidate.

[19] Report by Travelling Protector James Isdell to Chief Protector, in *Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for the Year Ending 30th June 1909*, p 9. In *Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families 1800–2000*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle 2000, p 235, Anna Haebich misquotes Isdell, attributing to him the view that half-castes should be given a chance 'to lead a better and purer life than their brothers', rather than 'to lead a better life than their mothers'.

[20] Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children From Their Families*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, April 1997, p 104; Henry Reynolds, *Nowhere People*, Viking, Melbourne, 2005, p 151; Haebich, *Broken Circles*, p 235; Choo, *Mission Girls*, p 148; Christine Choo, 'The Role of the Catholic Missionaries at Beagle Bay in the Removal of Aboriginal Children From Their Families in the Kimberley Region From the 1890s', *Aboriginal History*, 21, 1997

The above quotation is an accurate expression of Isdell's views. He certainly targeted a group defined by race, or, more accurately, by racial combination. His intention was to round-up all the half-caste children on the upper Fitzroy River, irrespective of whether or not they were well cared for. Indeed, he had surveyed the district in 1908 and drawn up a list of those he intended to remove. He said all the half-castes living inland on the Fitzroy were the offspring of Europeans, while those on the western coast of the Kimberley were 'half-bred Asians'.[21] He knew the Pallottine missionaries at Beagle Bay were willing to take in half-caste children. From the start of his appointment as inspector, Isdell had defined his role as 'the rescuing of waifs and strays from the contaminating influence of native camps and training them at this Mission'.[22] In September 1910, with the approval of Chief Protector Charles Gale, he set out on a 33 day expedition, accompanied by a police constable, and rounded up as many of these children as he could. He put them in a cart drawn by a mule he brought for the purpose. In mid-October he delivered nineteen of them to the police at Derby who shipped them on to the Beagle Bay Mission.[23]

It is not difficult to imagine the reputation this expedition must have given the travelling inspector and his successors among the parents of half-caste Aboriginal children in the Kimberley. The word must have spread very quickly about what the government man and his police offsider were doing. There is little doubt it must have affected folk memories in the district for years, probably decades, after.

The job of the historian, however, is not only to report popular attitudes but also to look beneath them to find out what really happened. Those historians who cite Isdell as the founder of a long line of pitiless child removalists normally combine his 1909 declaration of intent with an account of his 1910 expedition and leave it at that, as though they have said enough to make an incontrovertible case. None that I know has ever listed the total number of children Isdell actually removed. The reality was that Isdell was another public servant who talked a lot but accomplished little.

He was initially employed as travelling inspector in 1907 and continued in the position until 1913 when he was retrenched. In his six years in the job he removed a grand total of 27 children — three

[21] Report by Travelling Protector James Isdell to Chief Protector, in *Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for the year ending 30th June 1909*, p 9

[22] Protector Isdell's Report on the Beagle Bay Mission, 24 March 1908, in *Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for the year ending 30th June 1908*, p 22

[23] Report by Travelling Protector James Isdell to Chief Protector, in *Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for the Year Ending 30th June 1910*, p 11

from La Grange Bay in 1907, five from Cygnet Bay in 1908, and the nineteen from Fitzroy River in 1910.[24] That was all. He never took any steps to remove any of the Asian-Aboriginal children he identified in the camps along the Kimberley coast.

As his infamous quotation indicates, Isdell was anything but reticent about expressing his opinions. If he had taken any more children than this, he would have almost certainly mentioned them in his various reports. However, apart from those recorded here, he never did. Moreover, among the few removals he made, some were unarguably welfare cases. Three of the Cygnet Bay children were seriously malnourished and one girl had a dangerous curvature of the spine. Two of the boys from Fitzroy River, brothers aged sixteen and fourteen years, were both crippled and nearly blind. In other cases, he did not separate children from parents. Two of the half-caste girls from Fitzroy River went with their mother.[25] Hence, although Isdell's statements fitted perfectly the now-familiar image of an obsessive child-stealing travelling inspector, his exploits hardly matched up.

He was not alone. What stands out from the early government records is how very few children the state actually removed, to the missions or anywhere else. In Western Australia, once the Aborigines Act of 1905 had passed, Chief Protector Prinsep despatched thirteen children to institutions in the subsequent two years. Four of them were offenders sent by order of district magistrates, the rest were waifs and orphans, including Polly, the 5-year-old sexually abused half-caste girl discussed earlier. All went to two institutions in the south, the Swan Native and Half-Caste Home in Perth and the Salvation Army Settlement at Collie.[26] In 1908, Inspector McCarthy from Derby and Corporal Stewart from Broome between them sent eighteen children to the Beagle Bay Mission.[27] Added to the 27 James Isdell sent to Beagle Bay, the recorded intake totals 58 children sent to missions from 1906 to 1912, an average of fewer than ten a year. Given that, all up, Beagle Bay accommodated between 130 and 147 children over the subsequent five years (see Table 9.2 below), the children placed by the state were always in a minority. However you

[24] Protector Isdell's Report on the Beagle Bay Mission, 24 March 1908, and Report by Joseph Bischofs, Beagle Bay Mission, both in *Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for the Year Ending 30th June 1908*, pp 19, 20

[25] Protector Isdell's Report on the Beagle Bay Mission, 24 March 1908, pp 20, 22; Report by Travelling Inspector Isdell on West Kimberley, in *Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for the Year Ending 30th June 1909*, p 10

[26] Aborigines Department, *Report for Financial Year Ending 30th June 1905*, p 8; *Report for Financial Year Ending 30th June 1906*, pp 4, 8

[27] Joseph Bischofs, Report to the Department of Aborigines, Perth, in *Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for the Year Ending 30th June, 1908*, p 19

look at it, this was hardly a record that warranted historians' claims of a 'dramatic increase' or a 'special campaign' by the government to round up all the part-Aboriginal children in the Kimberley.[28]

THE REASON FOR THE FOCUS ON HALF-CASTE CHILDREN

It is clear from the words of both Isdell and the Pallottine monks at Beagle Bay that the children they were primarily interested in taking to their mission were half-castes. As other quotations later in this chapter demonstrate, this was the common presumption throughout the north. On the face of it, this looks like a racial preference, and the historian Anna Haebich wants us to believe it was motivated by racism, especially by the disgust of white officials at the thought of half-castes, being half-white, growing up amidst full-blood Aborigines. She cites Isdell as an apparently obvious example: 'It is not a pleasant sight to see almost white half-castes living among the Aborigines,' he wrote in 1909.[29]

Other historians have taken the same line, mocking Isdell for both racism and his apparent obsession with half-caste girls. Christine Choo argued that Isdell did more than anyone else to persuade his Chief Protector Charles Gale to remove half-caste children to the missions. He bombarded Gale with submissions, reports and letters, arguing strongly about the sexual ruination of half-caste girls.[30] Henry Reynolds said Isdell wanted to remove children 'particularly because of what he considered the open indecency and immorality of the camps. Youngsters were able to hear "vile conversations ordinarily carried on" that they were liable to repeat.'[31] Anna Haebich said when Isdell caught sight of white half-castes living among the Aborigines, it 'only served to strengthen his commitment to the removal of half-caste children and to stopping sexual contact between the races'.[32] According to Haebich, Isdell also shared the prevailing prejudices against Asians in the region. 'Children of mixed Asian and Aboriginal descent were doubly condemned.' Indeed, she described whites in the north at the time as obsessed with both race and sex. 'Anti-Asian racism and paranoia about Australia's security' merged with 'a panic about venereal disease in the north' to produce policies that discriminated against both Aboriginal and Asian races.[33] However, there was much more to it than this.

[28] Choo, 'The Role of the Catholic Missionaries at Beagle Bay', p 21
[29] cited by Haebich, *Broken Circles*, p 235
[30] Choo, *Mission Girls*, pp 147–8
[31] Reynolds, *Nowhere People*, p 150
[32] Haebich, *Broken Circles*, p 235
[33] Haebich, *Broken Circles*, pp 235–8

For a start, travelling inspectors and local authorities focused attention on half-caste children because they were the only ones they had the legal right to remove. Between 1897 and 1911, the governments responsible for Aboriginal affairs in the northern half of the Australian continent, that is, Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia (which then governed the Northern Territory), adopted a policy consensus based on the establishment of reserves for full-blood people, who still constituted the majority of the Aboriginal population across the whole region.[34] As Chapter Seven discussed, they followed the initial Queensland legislation whose intention was, as far as possible, to keep the full-blood population inviolate. For the same reason, the reserves were backed by state and territory legislation prohibiting inter-racial sex. In Queensland, this was called a policy of 'segregation from alien influences'. Its objective was to shore up and expand reserves where traditional Aboriginal culture could be preserved. The only assimilation of full-bloods envisaged was a very gradual process expected to occur over many generations, if ever. As Chapter Seven noted, this was why the infamous 1937 Canberra resolution in favour of assimilation was careful to specifically exclude Aborigines 'of the full blood'.

Despite the reputations the reserves subsequently acquired among historians and other urban intellectuals, the intentions of their creators was to preserve Aboriginal 'racial entity and racial pride'.[35] Implicit in this arrangement was that full-blood children should not be removed from Aboriginal society, no matter how compelling the apparent reason. This was well understood by all concerned. Only a small minority of children who went to the missions in this period were of full descent and all of them seem to have gone there with at least one of their parents.

Hence, even though some government officials like Isdell took a very dim view of the cultural practices of traditional society, they made no mention of taking full-blood children from their parents. The half-castes were the only children their governments and their Chief Protectors would permit them to remove.

The principal reason state and territory governments introduced such a policy was because all the reports from their local officers defined half-castes as a group with no fixed place in either white or black society. Lacking proper kinship relations within traditional

[34] C. D. Rowley, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society: Aboriginal Policy and Practice, Volume I*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1970, pp 182–219

[35] J. W. Bleakley, Chief Protector of Queensland, in *Aboriginal Welfare: Initial Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities Held at Canberra, 21st to 23rd April 1937*, Government Printer, Canberra, 1937, p 18

society, most were unacceptable there. They were usually the offspring of very young Aboriginal mothers, without family ties, and often half-caste themselves. In this chapter below, and also in Chapter Ten, I examine in greater detail the prospects of the lives of half-castes in the early twentieth century in Western Australia and the Northern Territory but here let me simply point to the two major causes of concern for both government welfare officers and missionaries.

Without some kind of education, half-caste boys with these origins found it difficult to make themselves useful in white society and so became waifs and strays on the fringes of white settlements. While some had mothers or grandmothers who could negotiate their acceptance into traditional society, many others did not. From the earliest days of the missions, the main objective in removing them from the streets was to send them to school. In 1904, Broome magistrate Dr Graham Blick recommended the Pallottine monks at Beagle Bay 'collect and train both in elementary and technical education the fatherless half-castes and other aboriginal children who were destitute in Broome'.[36]

Half-caste girls posed the bigger problem. They were in high demand around the settled districts as prostitutes and concubines. Unconnected to and unprotected by traditional society, they remained forever vulnerable. In a trade where they had a limited shelf life, the older they became and the more numerous their children the more they needed either the mission or the state to become their protector and provider. The history of both government welfare policy and the extension of mission activity in the north of the continent was inextricably bound up with the issue of the sexual exploitation of part-Aboriginal girls — exploitation by European men, Asian men, and their own families.

THE 'SYMBIOSIS' BETWEEN STATE AND MISSIONS

The main impact of the Roth report and the legislation of 1905 was on religious orders. They responded positively and found a new determination to establish missions in the Kimberley district, then the most remote and least settled part of the state. The majority of Aboriginal people there still lived traditional lives. The mission at Beagle Bay on the Kimberley coast had been founded in 1890 by the French Catholic order of La Trappe and, until the Roth inquiry, was the only continuously operating religious mission in the north. The

[36] cited by Choo, 'The role of Catholic missionaries at Beagle Bay', p 19. The power to remove orphans and destitute children became legal only after the passing of the 1905 Aborigines Act.

Trappists withdrew in 1898 to be replaced by a German order of Pallottine monks. A non-denominational mission was established on Sunday Island in 1899 by the English adventurer Sydney Hadley. After the 1905 Act, these two were soon joined by several others. A Catholic mission was set up in 1907 at nearby Cygnet Bay, followed by the Drysdale River Mission at Pago in 1908 (Catholic, later relocated to Kalumburu), the Port George IV Mission (Presbyterian, later known as Kunmunya) in 1911; Lombadina Mission (Catholic) in 1911, Saint John of God Convent at Broome in 1912, and the old Forrest River Mission, abandoned since 1898, was re-opened by the Anglicans in 1913.

The eventual destination of the children James Isdell rounded-up in 1910 was the Beagle Bay mission. This was an institution that has figured prominently in the story of the Stolen Generations in Western Australia. Academic historians have claimed it was a good example of the long-term collusion between government officials and the missionaries of the Kimberley that produced yet another shameful chapter in this narrative. According to Christine Choo:

> a symbiotic relationship developed between the Church and the State, in particular the Catholic missionaries who ran the mission at Beagle Bay and the Aborigines Department. This enabled Church and State to collude in the development of policies and practices which instituted and encouraged the removal of Aboriginal children from their families in Western Australia.[37]

Anna Haebich adopted the same terminology. She said there was 'a strong "symbiotic" relationship' between the government and the missions: 'governments removed the children and the missions took them in.'[38] Through their lobbying about the need to Christianize and civilize the natives, Haebich said, the missions contributed to emerging government policy, while also helping make the legislation publicly acceptable. Their low costs and private means of support meant missions could extend government removal policies into remote regions which would otherwise have been beyond the reach of the more costly state-run institutions. On the other hand, Haebich argued, the missionaries needed the government to permit them to establish themselves on Aboriginal reserves. They needed the power of the state's police force to deliver children removed from families, to ensure they remained at their new homes, and to round up any escapees. The missions also appreciated the modest subsidies govern-

[37] Christine Choo, 'The Role of the Catholic Missionaries at Beagle Bay', p 14

[38] Haebich, *Broken Circles*, p 348

ment gave them for the number of children they accommodated.[39] Choo, whose 1995 PhD thesis on the Beagle Bay Mission provided much of the information about events in the Kimberley used by both Haebich and the *Bringing Them Home* report, summarized her version of the missions' influence.

> The Pallottine approach to evangelization — to settle the people and remove the children — was the one they had adopted at Beagle Bay. Subsequently through the active pursuance of this policy by the Pallottine missionaries in Western Australia, this approach influenced the development of the State's Aboriginal affairs policy and practice throughout the period 1900–1950.[40]

In reality, however, only a small minority of mission children were sent there by the state. Neither local protectors such as police and magistrates, nor the sole other travelling inspector employed at the same time as Isdell, proved any more capable than he of rounding up children. Instead, the missions recruited most of their own residents through their own means. Since they had neither the legal authority nor the physical force to remove children themselves, the missions had to offer some enticement for them to come. Most children at missions were either placed there *by* their parents or actually went there *with* their parents. In the case of the half-castes who made up the majority of the Beagle Bay children, they usually went with their mothers and/or grandmothers who intended to settle in the community. Historians of the Stolen Generations don't like to acknowledge this. Choo admitted that up to 1907 the majority of children at Beagle Bay had been placed there by their parents.[41] After that date she simply described the number of children accompanied by parents as 'many'.[42]

For Aboriginal women from tribes where half-caste children were outcasts who could not be accepted into the traditional kinship structure, the option of moving to a mission was an attractive one. The mission became their protector and breadwinner while allowing

[39] Haebich, *Broken Circles*, pp 348–9

[40] Choo, 'The Role of the Catholic Missionaries at Beagle Bay', p 18

[41] Choo, 'The Role of the Catholic Missionaries at Beagle Bay', p 20

[42] Choo, *Mission Girls*, p 145. While Choo's work is well-researched and provides a lot of useful information, she wrote it firmly within the paradigm of the Stolen Generations story. At one stage she described in considerable detail the traumatic removal of five half-caste children from their white father's home in 1909 and their transportation to Beagle Bay, as recorded in her oral history interview with one of the children, Rosa Bin Amat. At almost the end of the interview, however, her informant revealed she had been taken into the mission by her own grandmother Annie: *Mission Girls*, pp 149–51

them to retain their children and watch them grow. However, *Bringing Them Home* claimed the government exploited their vulnerability in order to force them onto the missions. 'To put pressure on parents to send their children to the missions the Aborigines Department refused to assist orphaned or needy children away from the missions.'[43] It supports this accusation, however, with no evidence at all. In fact, this claim seems to have been a misinterpretation of an account of tactics employed at the Forrest River Mission to compel parents who were already resident there to send their children to the mission school each day.[44] Across Australia, from the earliest days of their activity, the missions acted as refuges for women who conceived children from illicit relationships. At Maloga Mission on the Murray River, Daniel Matthews reported in 1888 that this was one of his means of recruiting adherents. 'Illegitimate births have frequently occurred, where poor unfortunate girls have come to our mission, for that protection which society cannot afford.'[45]

The most common technique the missions used to attract followers was to give them presents of food. That was the usual way to get a mission started in a new region. The Spanish Benedictine Abbott Torres described the tactics used at Drysdale River in 1913: 'The wild natives of the district keep hovering around the Mission and come so close as to speak to our half-caste boys and quickly pick up the presents of articles of food or clothing we placed in their way dangling from the trees, but they are too shy to come in contact with the Fathers or Brothers of the Mission.'[46] Subsequently, groups of 30 or 40 local people would visit the mission where the monks would distribute their garden produce to them, especially the Aborigines' favourite, watermelon. For some, this process gradually came to involve both employment and religious conversion. Another priest wrote from Drysdale River in 1920: 'The native who goes to the mission is liberally fed, and is instructed in Christian Doctrine; and he, in acknowledgement of his good treatment assists the Missionaries either in working in the garden, mustering their cows, or clearing the ground for growing rice.'[47]

[43] *Bringing Them Home*, p 104

[44] Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, p 129

[45] Daniel Matthews, *Thirteenth Report of the Maloga Aboriginal Mission Station, Murray River, New South Wales*, Echuca, 1888, p 24

[46] Abbott Torres, Report to the Chief Protector of Aborigines for the Year Ending 30th June 1913, cited by Choo, *Mission Girls*, p 71

[47] Father William, OSB, 'The Benedictine Mission of Drysdale River', *St Ildephonsus' College Magazine*, Christmas 1920, cited by Choo, *Mission Girls*, p 72

Missions usually made regular contact with many more Aborigines than those who actually lived on the site. At Kunmunya in 1935, the mission maintained irregular contact with about 300 of the local people, with an 'average weekly attendance' of about 100.[48] Those most likely to initially take up permanent residence were the aged, sick or disabled. The missionaries readily persuaded their nomadic kinfolk to leave them in their care. The animosities of inter-tribal violence and warfare could also work in the missionaries' favour. For reasons unclear, some local Aborigines attacked the Drysdale River Mission in 1913, leaving one monk fatally wounded. The same tribesmen vented their antagonism on a number of the mission's Aboriginal visitors. As a result, immediately after the attack, some 238 men and women came in to the mission to have their wounds tended, to receive gifts of food and clothing, and to receive protection from further tribal retribution.[49]

In the early twentieth century, the missionaries also became worried about the apparent decline in the Aboriginal population, which they attributed primarily to a decline in the birth rate. Kimberley Aborigines had once been observed in family groups with five or six children, but many couples in the recent generation were childless. This led the Benedictines at Drysdale River to re-double their efforts to attract those families who had children to settle there permanently by building them houses and providing a regular supply of food.[50]

In several other parts of Australia, during bad seasons when the natural food supply dried up, parents still living in the bush were encouraged to leave their malnourished children with missionaries. Mary Bennett observed this at the Mount Margaret Mission on the Western Australian goldfields. Aboriginal women who could not find enough food brought their children in to the mission. They left them there but came back frequently to see them.[51] As Chapter Six also noted, the outback trader and author, R. M. Williams recalled that in central Australia during the drought of the early 1930s, when Aboriginal women discovered that missionaries would feed their half-caste children, they would wait on the side of the road for the mail truck to come along to hand them over to the driver who would take them to the United Aborigines Mission at Oodnadatta.

It is also clear that education provided a strong attraction to some Aboriginal parents. At Beagle Bay, Peter Biskup recorded, parents were asked to 'give' their children to the mission to be educated until

[48] Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, p 128
[49] Choo, *Mission Girls*, p 70
[50] Choo, *Mission Girls*, pp 72–3
[51] Mary Bennett, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 19 March 1934, transcript p 216

they were sixteen. The same was true of the Spanish Benedictine mission, New Norcia, in the south-west of the state, which gathered children from a wide area, 'the parents usually agreeing to their offspring remaining at the mission until they were at least sixteen'.[52] Christine Choo agreed the Pallottine monks and the Sisters of St John of God at the mission school provided as good a standard primary school education as state schools gave to white children or the Catholic school system provided in Perth: 'Beagle Bay Mission, therefore, did provide well for the children in their care by giving them the best education they could offer.'[53]

In this period, the number of children on the Kimberley missions increased. However, it hardly amounted to the dramatic shift claimed by some historians. When compared to the several thousand in the Aboriginal population of the district, the number of mission children remained very small. Beagle Bay Mission increased its total number of children from just 60 in 1907 to 131 in 1912; at the same time the children on Sunday Island increased from 29 to 61; and the Lombadina Mission opened in 1912 with an intake of 24 children.[54]

In fact, this brief flurry of activity in the early twentieth century was the high point of enthusiasm within the missionary movement. Over the next twenty years, a few additional institutions were added to the state total but, at the same time, others closed. As always, the numbers of children they accommodated remained very small. The Moseley Royal Commission hearings in 1934 elicited most of the figures recorded in Table 9.1. These tiny totals were the entirety of children accommodated by religions missions in Western Australian in 1932, in both the north and south of the state. On these figures alone, no one can take seriously the claim by historians that the church and the state were engaged in a symbiotic relationship to steal the state's Aboriginal children.

Moreover, even the most populous of the Western Australian missions, Beagle Bay, never held large numbers of children. Table 9.2 records the number accommodated there for those years for which figures survive between 1910 and 1936. At most, they amounted to the equivalent of about three classes at a state primary school at the time.

[52] Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, pp 124, 126

[53] Choo, 'The Role of the Catholic Missionaries at Beagle Bay', p 26

[54] Aborigines Department, *Report for Financial Year Ending 30th June 1907*, p 12; *Report on the Work of the Aborigines Department During the Year Ending 30th June 1912*, pp 5, 14

TABLE 9.1: ABORIGINAL CHILDREN AT RELIGIOUS MISSIONS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA, 1932

Name	*Location*	*Church or organization*	*Number of children*
New Norcia	South-West	Roman Catholic	47
Lombadina	Kimberley	Roman Catholic	28
Beagle Bay	Kimberley	Roman Catholic	117
Drysdale River	Kimberley	Roman Catholic	13
Kunmunya	Kimberley	Presbyterian	12
Forrest River	Kimberley	Anglican	45
Mount Margaret	Eastern goldfields	United Aborigines Mission	45
Sunday Island	Kimberley	United Aborigines Mission	30
Badjaling	South-West	United Aborigines Mission	30
Gnowangerup	South-West	United Aborigines Mission	30
Total			397

Sources: Table presented in evidence to Moseley Royal Commission by Mary Bennett of United Women's Guild, 19 March 1934, transcript p 237. The figure for Drysdale River is from Eugene Perez, *Kalumburu: The Benedictine Mission and the Aborigines 1908–1975*, Kalumburu Benedictine Mission, Wyndham, 1977, pp 87–8. The number at the Beagle Bay Mission is from its 1932 annual report, cited by Christine Choo, *Mission Girls*, University of Western Australia Press, Crawley, 2001, p 299.

TABLE 9.2 ABORIGINAL CHILDREN RESIDING AT BEAGLE BAY MISSION, WESTERN AUSTRALIA, 1910–1936

Year	*Number of children*	*Year*	*Number of children*
1910	105	1924	72
1911	94	1925	80
1912	131	1926	87
1913	147	1928	90
1914	143	1929	91
1915	130	1930	107
1916	132	1931	110
1921*	80	1932	117
1923	70	1936	124

*Where there are gaps between years, no records are available for those years.

Source: Annual reports of the Beagle Bay Mission, compiled from annual reports of the Aborigines Department, 1910–1936, cited by Christine Choo, *Mission Girls*, Appendix E, p 299

The alleged collusion between state and missions loses any remaining credibility when one considers how little money the government handed over, and how grudgingly this occurred. Historian Peter Biskup, who examined this topic in greater detail than any of his successors, found the relationship rarely rose to being cordial, let alone anything approaching 'symbiotic'. From 1898 to 1915, under the regimes of Chief Protectors Henry Prinsep and Charles Gale, the government tolerated missions rather than encouraged them. Subsidies were unpredictable and issued on an *ad hoc* basis, often influenced by political pressure.[55] Even when the Beagle Bay Mission was favoured by government in its early years, only 20 per cent of its revenue came from the state. The rest was made up by donations from Germany and Australia and the income the monks earned from their agricultural and pastoral produce.[56] In 1915, the Labor government minister H. R. Underwood announced he would withdraw subsidies to the New Norcia and Kunmunya missions and reduce all the rest to a bare minimum. Following the outbreak of the First World War, Underwood also interned all the German Pallottine monks in prison camps on Rottnest Island, off Perth, and at Liverpool in New South Wales. At the time, A. O. Neville drew up various plans to close

[55] Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, pp 134–5

[56] Choo, 'The Role of the Catholic Missionaries at Beagle Bay', p 23

three of the West Kimberley missions and replace them with a large government-owned cattle station. Two missions in the south of the state, Dulhi Gunyah and the Swan Native and Half-Caste Home, closed in 1917 and 1921 because of reduced state funding.[57]

Overall, Biskup traced a relationship that was anything but friendly. During the First World War the department openly pursued an anti-mission policy. During the 1920s, an uneasy truce prevailed in which the missions were neither supervised nor interfered with. The 1930s saw a revival of 'open warfare', especially over the 1936 Native Administration Act. On Neville's retirement in 1940 there was a temporary rapprochement between government and missionaries. But by 1943 the old animosities had reasserted themselves.

MARY BENNETT AND THE SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN

Anna Haebich has argued that behind the missionaries' professed concerns about the sexual vulnerability of Aboriginal girls lay their real intentions: to collect sufficient adherents to make their missions a success:

> after all, they had travelled far to work with the people and were personally committed to spreading their message and rescuing children for a 'life with Christ'. Father Walter of Beagle Bay told the Roth Royal Commission: 'The children, both half-caste and black should be removed from the centres of vice such as Broome and other places and brought to this or any other institution which is working in the interests of the blacks.' Missionaries *needed* a flock of young children — they were the 'putty' for creating a strong Christian community — and the government subsidies they brought with them. To this end they actively encouraged families and pressured the government to send in 'half-caste' children to their care.[58]

It is true, of course, that the overseas missionaries wanted to fulfil the Christian ideals that brought them to Australia but their concerns about 'centres of vice such as Broome' were anything but pretexts for religious objectives. Once they learnt of the prevalence of child sexual abuse, the missionaries became especially concerned to remove children from such an environment. Both the missionaries and the travelling inspectors knew they were rescuing children, especially girls, from a regimen of forcible sex with adults.

Eventually, the most powerful spokesperson on this question was the Anglican lay missionary, Mary Bennett. She identified and united a number of issues about child sexuality, the morbidity and mortality that accompanied it, and the violence within traditional society towards both women and girls that derived from their ownership by

[57] Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, pp 134–8

[58] Haebich, *Broken Circles*, p 241 (her emphasis and her scare quotes)

husbands and fathers. Bennett gained experience of these conditions in the 1930s as a teacher at the missions at Forrest River in the Kimberley, Gnowangerup in the south-west and Mount Margaret near Laverton on the state's eastern goldfields. This woman has become one of the better known characters in the history of Aboriginal affairs, largely for her public criticisms of Chief Protector A. O. Neville.

Bennett was the daughter of a pastoralist and grew up on the family property in north-west Queensland. She spent her married life in England where she became involved in the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines' Protection Society. She also joined the feminist organization, the St Joan's Social and Political Alliance, which campaigned against the slave-like status of indigenous women in the British Empire, especially India. Both organizations successfully lobbied the League of Nations to establish covenants on the 'sacred trust of civilization' for the protection and governance of the world's native races. Widowed in 1927, Bennett began writing for newspapers such as the *Manchester Guardian* on 'the Australian Aboriginal problem'. She gained a reputation as 'a champion of the blacks'. In 1930, she published her book, *The Australian Aboriginal as a Human Being*,[59] which demanded Australia conform to the new international standards. That year, aged 50, she returned to Australia to further the cause and to deploy the tactics and arguments she had learned in England. Basing herself in Western Australia, she offered her services to local missions and to the feminist political lobby, the Women's Service Guild.[60]

In 1934 Bennett's scathing denunciations of Neville's regime in both the Australian and English press led the Western Australian government to establish the Royal Commission headed by Henry Moseley. She became the commission's star witness. One of the few reprieves from the depressing content of the inquiry's 1800 pages of transcripts is provided by her exchanges in March 1934 with Neville himself. She stood up to his questions gamely, reminding him both of his duties under British law and of the inherent rights of Aboriginal women. For the latter, she has generated a recent controversy among academic feminists.[61] Bennett's feminism, however, was not only

[59] M. M. Bennett, *The Australian Aboriginal as a Human Being*, Alston Rivers, London, 1930

[60] Alison Holland, ' "Whatever her Race, a Woman is not a Chattel" Mary Montgomery Bennett', in Anna Cole, Victoria Haskins and Fiona Paisley, eds, *Uncommon Ground: White Women in Aboriginal History*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2005

[61] Alison Holland, 'Wives and Mothers Like Ourselves? Exploring White Women's Intervention in the Politics of Race, 1920s–1940s', *Australian Historical Studies*, 32, 117, October 2001; Ann Curthoys, 'Response: Refiguring Histories of Women and Children', *Australian Historical Studies*, 32, 117,

directed at the insensitivities and failures of Neville's department but even more at the sexual oppression of women and children she found rampant within traditional Aboriginal society.

Bennett spoke for many Christian missionaries when she deplored the marriage customs that made polygamy the norm and which betrothed very young girls to old Aboriginal men, making them their property. She told the commission:

> The desert tribes of Western Australia are known above the others for having worked out the most complete rules for maintaining the supremacy of a patriarchal oligarchy by compelling the women and young people to accept the property status, which is just slavery, property in human flesh. The old men polygamists assign the female children at birth amongst themselves, and every female child, be she full-blood aboriginal or be she half-white, is the property of some old polygamist. One result in a settled district that I know is that there are at least fifty young men unmarried, and with no prospect of marrying for many years, and then they will have to marry girls who are hardly more than children, whereas if polygamy was stopped in the settled districts, they could have young women for their wives now.[62]

Bennett was disturbed by the consequences of Aboriginal girls being married while they were still children. Because they were so physically immature, those who became pregnant almost always gave birth to babies that were either stillborn or who died soon after. She said:

> Child-marriage, which frequently has harmful consequences to the poor little mothers, and to the children as well: It is traditional that the first baby does not live, but I am unable to say whether it is killed. Narteen's first baby, which was born at the mission when she was 16, is a beautiful child, but there was general incredulity at the camp that it could have been born alive, and it was illuminating to hear the comments about the first baby never surviving ... when there is a lot of trouble, the natives will call in the witch doctor, and in the first confinement there is nearly always a lot of trouble. When the witch doctor is called in, the result nearly always is a dead baby. The great need which would quickly effect reform is a sound public opinion founded on the Christian teaching of the intrinsic value of every human being.[63]

October 2001; Marilyn Lake, 'Response: Women and "Whiteness" ', *Australian Historical Studies*, 32, 117, October 2001; Alison Holland, 'Mary Bennett and the Feminists: A Response', *Australian Historical Studies*, 120, October 2002, pp 398–400

[62] Mary Bennett, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 19 March 1934, transcript p 215

[63] Mary Bennett, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 19 March 1934, transcript p 220

Bennett was not the only white woman to raise concerns about these practices. When Daisy Bates visited Beagle Bay in 1900 she witnessed the same thing:

> Northern girls marry earlier than their Southern sisters, and sometimes they begin to bear children when very young. In these cases the labour is both prolonged and severe, and many a young mother, who in our civilized countries would scarcely be thought out of childhood, has endured days of agonizing labour only to succumb in the end. Baby and mother are then buried together whether the baby be dead or alive.[64]

One of the tribal rituals to which Mary Bennett most strongly objected was that of the incision of girls' genitalia at puberty. She did not describe in detail exactly how invasive this exercise was, but she made it clear that girls were terrified at the prospect, and that some older Aboriginal women recalled it as one of the great traumas of their lives.

> The practice to which I refer is that of intercision of the girls at the age of puberty. The vagina is cut with glass by the old men, and that involves a great deal of suffering ... Girls are made to suffer incision at puberty at the hands of one of the old men, but if they get wind of it they come to the mission till the danger is passed. Dooa escaped by coming to the mission; Yougada did not escape. I remember hearing my old aboriginal nurse speak with horror of the suffering which she had been made to undergo.[65]

Bennett was also appalled at the degree of violence Aboriginal men routinely directed at their wives. She argued that this was a product of the polygamous social system.

> Polygamy is the cause of nearly every fight between natives. A man takes another wife; sooner or later the first wife has reason to be jealous of the new wife, and a fight ensues between them. Old Wodja of the Koolahr tribe at Forrest River brought me his new wife one morning after a terrible beating from his first wife, and I spent days nursing her back to life after the most terrible shock and battering. A great number of examples of suffering and injuries can be given. If the husband takes part in the fight, he sides with the new wife and the first wife gets an unmerciful beating. It is not usual for her relatives to interfere, for she is his property to do what he likes with, but sometimes family affection is too strong and there is a spear fight between the men. If one should chance to be killed, it starts a vendetta which is endless ... An unfaithful wife may be put to death, and her husband is held to be justified in killing her, though he may have five other wives, and may have neglected or deserted her, or sold her to white men. Mary Ann, killed at Laverton, had been sold to white men many times by her husband, Moonggie, but when she failed to return at his

[64] Bates, *The Native Tribes of Western Australia*, p 127

[65] Mary Bennett, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 19 March 1934, transcript p 220, 20 March 1934, p 299

> command, his brother Bung-arra in his absence, righteously according to native law, speared her to death. The brother was imprisoned for seven years, but nothing was done to improve the position of native women or give them the protection of our laws.[66]

It should be noted that Bennett was not building a case that offered any support for Neville removing children from Aboriginal families, a practice she deplored, or for his ideas about breeding out the colour. She thought it wrong to remove any children to distant settlements, such as Moore River, because they would not grow up in their own country and it was impossible for bush Aborigines to visit them there. At Mount Margaret, when poor seasons reduced the food available to the desert Aborigines, the mission encouraged parents to leave their children to be accommodated in dormitories or 'homes' constructed for the purpose. [67] The mission superintendent's wife, Mysie Schenk, described the policy.

> Mount Margaret policy was that children should stay in the homes only with the willing cooperation of the parents; that it was better for children to stay in their own country where parents had daily contact with them to nurse, cuddle and talk to them, and where they knew that they were being fed properly.[68]

Nor could Bennett be accused of a racist disdain for all Aboriginal men or for all Aboriginal customs. At one stage in Bennett's interrogation by Neville, the following exchange took place:

> You referred to half-caste children being taken from their mothers. Do you think it is better to let them stay in the bush and mate with full-bloods? — That is better than to start promiscuous relationship with white people, so that they belong to no one and have no family ties. I do not think there is anything revolting in a half-caste girl marrying a full-blooded aboriginal. If they are in love with each other, I see nothing against it. Some of the men are fine fellows.[69]

Nor was Bennett impressed by the attitudes of the local pastoralists in the Kimberley and the state's eastern desert regions where she had worked. She regarded the pastoralists and Neville's department as united in support of everything she criticized about the status of women and children under customary law. Indeed, she argued that

[66] Mary Bennett, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 19 March 1934, transcript pp 215–16

[67] Mary Bennett, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 19 March 1934, transcript p 216

[68] Margaret Morgan, *A Drop in a Bucket: The Mount Margaret Story*, United Aborigines Mission, Box Hill, 1986, p 107

[69] Mary Bennett, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 20 March 1934, transcript p 301

the spread of the pastoral industry had simply provided an additional means through which Aboriginal child-brides could be sexually exploited by their husbands.

> The squatters say, 'Don't interfere with native customs', but ... the native customs which the squatters choose to support are comprised in the property status of women and young people under the patriarchal system, which the squatters have commercialized, bartering with the old native men for the old men's surplus property in wives, and for the unpaid labour of the young men. The old men need never starve while they can trade their supernumerary girl wives and the unpaid labour of the young men to the white men for flour and tobacco. Squatters always tell me that the girls come to them unsought, but this is not always true. The girl often does protest against being sent to a white man, in spite of hunger and in spite of incurring beatings and threats from her aged native owner; but whether she struggles against the degradation to which she is forced, or whether she loses heart and gives up, eventually, in nine cases out of ten, despair and disease destroy soul and body.[70]

DORMITORIES AND THE DESTRUCTION OF ABORIGINAL CULTURE

In several historical accounts, the dormitories constructed to house children have borne most of the weight of the charge that missionaries were guilty of destroying Aboriginal culture. By separating children in dormitories and strictly limiting contact with parents — even though the latter still lived in another part of the mission compound — the missionaries have been accused of corrupting the cultural development of the children, replacing the Aborigines' own spiritual beliefs with those of Western Christianity. Christine Choo has written:

> One of the most significant effects of the transfer of children to the dormitories which occurred between 1900 and the 1950s was the loss of contact with the older members of their families and communities, and consequently the erosion of their knowledge of traditional life. Generations of Aboriginal women who lived at Beagle Bay missions have spoken about their sense of loss of culture, and their attempts as children to maintain contact with the older people in order to obtain information about the old ways, which the missionaries frustrated. As children they were not allowed to talk about their parents or enquire about them; they were forbidden from speaking their own languages, among themselves or with the older people in the Colony; the parents who lived in the Colony were not allowed to visit or make unregulated contact with the children.[71]

[70] Mary Bennett, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 19 March 1934, transcript p 214

[71] Choo, 'The Role of the Catholic Missionaries at Beagle Bay', p 27

Other historians have taken this case further. The missionaries' ultimate aim was radical: to discard what they regarded as the savage customs of nomadic life and bring up children in 'a civilized and Christian way', training them in the habits of 'industry, cleanliness and order'. According to Bain Attwood in *The Making of the Aborigines*, the principal Victorian mission at Ramahyuck aimed through its Christian rituals, its teaching and even its architecture and landscape to destroy former notions of collectivism, egalitarianism and kin obligations in favour of paternalism, modesty, cleanliness and, above all, individualism. The act of baptizing converts and giving them Christian names was designed to replace names drawn from places or totemic animals that reflected the Aborigines' subordination to their communities and to nature.

> The missionaries sought to make each an integrated centre of consciousness, distinct from the natural world and other Aborigines; they were to become accustomed to choice and the achievement of status, rather than being bound by the obligations of a kin-based society which ascribed status; the individual was to replace the group as the crucial moral or ethical unit, a strong sense of sin and responsibility for their own salvation replacing notions of shame.[72]

Similarly, an emphasis on cleanliness and decency, including washing, using a toilet and wearing clothes, claimed Attwood, 'went hand in hand with the missionaries' desire to instil their own conventions of gentility'.[73]

Other recent historians have emphasized the brutality and authoritarianism the missionaries allegedly deployed. In *Governing Savages*, Andrew Markus titled one section of his book 'Muscular Christianity', which he opened by asserting:

> The coming of the missionaries entailed the establishment of a new centre of authority, both moral and physical. The dominant approach of the age was 'strictly authoritarian'. Missionaries attempted to impose a new morality, involving acceptable forms of behaviour and appropriate punishment for transgressors.[74]

According to Markus, the dormitory system, which was a feature of life on most missions in the inter-war period, was an extension of the missionary imperative to exercise control over the lives of the children they removed there.

[72] Bain Attwood, *The Making of the Aborigines*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1989, p 19

[73] Attwood, *The Making of the Aborigines*, p 21

[74] Andrew Markus, *Governing Savages*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1990, p 74

> Under various forms of compulsion, parents handed over children between the ages of five and ten. The children were compelled to sleep in separate dormitories for boys and girls were locked in from sunset to sunrise.

Their rationale for this, Markus said, was a conservative disdain for unpredictable and disorderly forms of behaviour.

> If young and old were allowed to mix freely, the result was 'chaos', or in the view of Reverend E. Gribble, moral depravity: on a north Queensland mission, when the girls were allowed to mix with adults on weekends 'shocking things happened'.[75]

Today, throughout the western world, most academics and other members of the intelligentsia subscribe to a form of cultural relativism that regards the missionaries' ambitions as grave moral errors. The idea of Westerners bringing civilization to people whose culture had never developed beyond that required for the kinship networks of small hunter-gatherer bands is now decidedly out of fashion. Even within the current intellectual framework, however, it still needs to be said that the missionaries were neither as morally crude nor as culturally insensitive as they are now routinely portrayed. Australian historians have not told their full story.

For a start, most historians allow their readers to assume that the Aborigines had no choice in any of this. The truth was the missions were not prisons and the adult Aborigines who lived on them were not captives. They could leave whenever they wanted to, and could take their children with them if they chose. The missionaries had no legal authority or any physical means to restrain them by force. Apart from children declared wards of the Chief Protector or the Aborigines Protection Board and sent to a mission by their order, most people had to be enticed to come and persuaded to stay. Those Aborigines determined to preserve their traditional culture were free to keep well away from the missions and bring up their children with whatever beliefs they chose to give them. Indeed, those who did come in to the missions, especially the mothers and their children, usually did so because they wanted to escape the life they led in traditional society. Hence, the cultural change inflicted on mission residents was imposed on willing recipients, with the exception of a small minority of orphans and neglected children, almost all of them half-castes.

Moreover, in order to demonize the missionaries in the eyes of their readers, most recent historians have constructed straw men, Hollywood stereotypes rather than people of their time and place. In reality, most missionaries were far from crude, authoritarian funda-

[75] Markus, *Governing Savages*, p 80

mentalists bent on totally obliterating the beliefs and practices of the heathens. By the early twentieth century, some Christian missions had been operating in the new worlds of the Americas and the Pacific for the best part of 400 years. Most well knew that to make converts they could not do it in blanket opposition to the existing cosmologies of the indigenous peoples, but only by working with them and through them. Others, however, with little or no traditions in the field, were much less sensitive. It is historically inaccurate to write about the latter as if they were the only kind. One of the few Australian historians of recent decades who understood this was Peter Biskup. In his 1973 history of Aboriginal policy in Western Australia, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, he included a chapter on the practical difficulties and doctrinal compromises the missionaries had to make in order to reach the hearts and minds of the first generation they hoped to lead to Christ. He also made it clear that it was very hard to generalize about the missions since different ideas prevailed at each one, even within the same Christian denomination and even at the same mission at different times. In discussing the north and east of Western Australia, Biskup provided the following scenarios.

Beagle Bay: The first Pallottine superintendent, Father Joseph Bischofs, insisted the brothers interfere as little as possible with the customs of the Aborigines who came to the mission. This extended to endorsing traditional marriages between old men and child brides, and as noted earlier, even persuading Bishop Gibney in 1900 to officiate at one such wedding. Father Bischofs was an anthropologist 'of some repute'[76] and he established a tradition that saw a succession of academic researchers come to Beagle Bay for extended periods of fieldwork. In 1908, visiting anthropologist, Professor Hermann Klaatsch of Heidelberg University, observed that the Pallottines demonstrated 'religion need not interfere with the natural pleasure and enjoyment of the aboriginal race'. In his 1928 account of the Pallottine approach at Beagle Bay, Father George Walter wrote: 'It is not the duty of the Missionary to repress a child's Aboriginal nature and for this reason the children are given as much freedom as possible to follow their customs and practices.'[77] After the First World War, the mission welcomed the anthropologist and linguist E. A. Worms, who in 1935 was joined by colleague Herman Nekes. One of their pri-

[76] P. J. Bischofs, 'Die Niol Niol, ein Eingeborenenstamm in Nordwest-Australien', *Anthropos*, 3, 1908; 'Chiringa und Totems in Nordwest-Australien', *Anthropos*, 4, 1909

[77] Georg Walter, *Australia: Land, People, Mission* (trans. I. Danaher), Bishop of Broome, Broome, 1982, cited by Choo, 'The Role of the Catholic Missionaries at Beagle Bay', p 18

mary tasks was to identify those aspects of Aboriginal culture that were compatible with Christianity. They became so immersed in the Aboriginal cultures they studied they eventually became joint authors of the monumental text, *Aboriginal Languages*, published in 1953. [78]

Kunmunya: From 1927 to 1940, when it was run by the Reverend J. R. B. Love, this Presbyterian mission on the west Kimberley coast practised what it called 'enlightened gradualism'. Like the Pallottine superintendents, Love was a highly educated man, with degrees from Adelaide and Melbourne universities. Love's guiding principle was to 'save the black race as a black race, keeping everything in the tribal organization that is good, and using it as a foundation on which to build Christianity'. There was no separate dormitory at Kunmunya and children slept with their parents while attending school. Love condoned tribal mutilations and the circumcision and sub-incision of boys, but he strictly opposed polygamy, child marriage and 'the evil influence of the *banmandja* (medicine man)'. At funerals, he criticized tribal practice of divining the person who had killed the deceased but nonetheless conducted hybrid ceremonies where, after the Christian rites, he participated in shouting farewell to the departing spirit of the dead person. To help convert his charges, Love translated the gospels of Saint Mark and Saint Luke into the Worora language. At his mission school, children were instructed in English as well as in their tribal language. [79]

Forrest River: At this Anglican mission, a diametrically opposed set of relations existed. This derived, however, less from the missionary aim of winning converts and far more from the personality of its superintendent, the Reverend Ernest Gribble. Biskup described him as 'headstrong, self-righteous and authoritarian, with a permanent chip on his shoulder and a tendency to blame others for his or the mission's misfortunes'.[80] If Aboriginal parents refused to allow their children to attend the school or to sleep in the dormitory, he stopped their rations. On reaching adolescence, he married them in complete disregard to their parents' wishes or tribal custom. He discouraged family life, allowing couples to spend the night together but in the daytime keeping the women in the 'ladies compound'. The Australian Board of Missions became so concerned at the rumours surrounding his administration, it asked Professor A. P. Elkin to investigate the mission. Elkin recommended that Gribble, who in 1928 showed clear signs of being mentally unbalanced, be replaced.

[78] Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, p 126
[79] Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, pp 127–8
[80] Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, p 128

His successor, his son Jack, proved little better and in 1930 was implicated in a number of incidents involving flogging of inmates, chaining them to posts for sexual offences, and pouring water over snoring boys.[81]

Drysdale River: This mission, located at Pago on the north Kimberley coast before its relocation to nearby Kalumburu in the 1930s, was founded by the same order of Spanish Benedictine monks who in 1846 established the New Norcia Mission, north of Perth. Despite their experience, the Drysdale River Mission was one of the least successful in attracting children.[82] Its small size and lack of funds for major building works meant that its few children lived in closer contact with their families and with traditional culture than on any of the other Kimberley missions. Although founded in 1908 it did not construct a dormitory for girls until 1931. Until then, the few girls it singled out for further education were normally sent off to the school at Beagle Bay Mission.[83]

Mount Margaret: Of all the Western Australian missions, Mount Margaret seemed to be the one that did most to advance its charges into the modern world. In secular terms, it was widely regarded by contemporary observers as a success. It was established in 1921 under the auspices of the Australian Aborigines' Mission (later the United Aborigines' Mission) to the east of the goldfields centre of Laverton. Its founder, the businessman turned missionary R. S. Schenk, knew what was required to make a living in the modern world. Refused funding by A. O. Neville's department, Schenk started a trade in dingo scalps with local Aborigines, and persuaded some to become small-time gold leaseholders. He stressed vocational education for the boys, giving them skills in carpentry, shearing, mechanical engineering and all aspects of mining so they could take advantage of the opportunities for skilled men on the goldfields. For girls, as well as domestic service, his mission offered training in nursing and typing, both growth areas of female employment. The arrival at Mount Margaret of Mary Bennett in 1933 saw a major improvement in teaching methods at the mission school, including the adoption of the state school curriculum. (Bennett later described her methods in the booklet *Teaching the Aborigines: Data from Mount Margaret*.) However, of all the missionaries in the state, Schenk was the most uncompromising in his attitude to Aboriginal culture. He strove for the speedy breakdown of almost all Aboriginal customs and traditions. He

[81] Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, p 129
[82] Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, p 127
[83] Perez, *Kalumburu*, p 87; Choo, *Mission Girls*, p 165

opposed not only those aspects of the culture that were incompatible with Christianity but also apparently neutral customs too. He had an acrimonious relationship with Neville, accusing him of wanting to keep full-blood tribal people as 'museum specimens' and of sanctioning the 'stark and barbarous superstitions of the dark ages'. He was also opposed to academic anthropologists like Phyllis Kaberry who visited his region and 'encourage the natives in all kinds of superstitious rites in opposition to our teaching'.[84]

THE SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF MISSION DORMITORIES

Why, then, did virtually all the larger mission settlements construct separate dormitories to house boys and girls of school age? This happened right across Australia, from Warangesda and Cumeroogunga in New South Wales to Beagle Bay in the west. Why was this one of their major priorities?

The idea of constructing dormitories for children was not invented in Australia in order to create the Stolen Generations. For a start, it had long been the standard practice in religious educational institutions throughout Britain, Europe and, of course, for white children in Australia. This was simply the age-old Western tradition of how educational institutions functioned. In the nineteenth century, the construction of dormitories was common colonial practice wherever missionaries operated in Africa, Asia, the Americas and the Pacific. There was not one overriding reason. Buildings of this kind served several purposes the missionaries regarded as important.

Rescuing orphans, waifs and abandoned children found on the fringes of white towns and settlements was a priority activity for most missions. Hence most housed a noticeable proportion of children who had no parents or guardians. Coming from different territories and speaking different languages, they were often strangers to other Aborigines on the mission and could not be easily fostered with them. Constructing a dormitory for orphans was one of the first priorities of mission accommodation. The original name for the dormitory sometimes reflected this fact. At Cumeroogunga in 1892, the manager reported:

> The Home for Orphan Girls has been altered and improved; it is quite large enough for present requirements and fairly comfortable. Here the orphans find all that a mother's love and care could give them. [85]

[84] Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, pp 132–3

[85] Manager's report from Cumeroogunga Mission, in *Annual Report of the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Association for 1892*, Sydney, 1893

This building later became the dormitory for all girls, whether orphans or not.

Most missions had objectives to provide secular education goals as well as religious instruction. They found the discipline required for children to attend school regularly and for sustained periods was more readily achieved if children of school age were housed separately from their parents and younger siblings, even though their family lived nearby on the same site. The Superior of the Beagle Bay Mission, Father Georg Walter, described his policy in 1928:

> As soon as possible, children can be removed from the adult camp and the nomadic ways of their parents, and be housed in dormitories on mission premises to be educated at school and in trades.[86]

However, this ideal was not always enforced. In its annual report to government in 1913, the Beagle Bay Mission recorded it accommodated 146 children, but eleven of them 'for the time being are allowed to be in the camp with their mothers at night'.[87]

Dormitories were also set up to protect children from sexual predators and other kinds of sexual exposure. Because a mission normally contained a much larger number of women and girls than could be found in either the fringe camps or the bush, they often proved a magnet for young unmarried Aboriginal men. Again, this was evident from the experience of the earliest missions. 'Two young men that came down from the Murrumbidgee to Maloga ... gained access to the Queensland girl Lucy's bedroom,' reported Daniel Matthews in 1888. 'As soon as I became acquainted with the grave nature of the offence, I ordered them to immediately leave the Station.'[88] He built a separate dormitory for unmarried women and girls, supervised by his wife, acting as matron.

Many sexual predators were, of course, white men. Mary Bennett told the Moseley Royal Commission of her own experience of men on the goldfields going on a 'gin spree':

> Last year, July 22nd, 1933, I saw a motor car load of men provided with drink and they went to a blacks' camp and demanded women. A missionary went to the camp and told them to go; they went, but after dark they returned; but some missionaries suspected they would return, and made their way to the camp; the white men bent on a 'gin spree' had already

[86] Georg Walter, *Australia: Land, People, Mission*, cited by Choo, 'The Role of the Catholic Missionaries at Beagle Bay', p 18

[87] Thomas Bachmair to Chief Protector, Beagle Bay Mission, Annual Report for the year ending 30th June 1913, in *Report by the Chief Protector of Aborigines, Western Australia*, 1913, typescript version

[88] Daniel Matthews, *Thirteenth Report of the Maloga Aboriginal Mission Station*, Echuca, 1888, p 7

> given drink to some of the native men, but other natives saw the lantern and recognized footsteps, and warned off the white men in time to save the native women from molestation.[89]

At Drysdale River in the Kimberley, Father Eugene Perez recorded in July 1930 that, without the protection of the mission, 'the women, the main bone of contention, were defenceless, and remained subject to all sorts of corruption'. While the bush Aborigines initially professed disdain for women who left them to go to the mission, they later tried to entice some to return for events that the missionaries regarded as little more than sexual orgies.

> It was different when bush natives wanted the women for some of their lecherous 'socials', opposed not only to Christian morality but to basic human decency ... We cannot impede such venereal feasting, but we are determined, at least, not to allow it here, and not to permit them to help themselves to the home women, because bush females do not satisfy them. It seems that the woman who had come to invite the others had been sent by the witch doctors. The furore of the degrading 'social' continued for weeks and became contagious: 'Those at home and in the bush have gone. The attraction is the sexual festival mentioned above, which is still booming.'[90]

Dormitories, however, were not perfect sanctuaries and there were situations where girls could be coerced into leaving them. According to Mary Bennett, the most troublesome demands came from the Aboriginal men who claimed female children as their wives. She told the Moseley Royal Commission in 1934 that the Mount Margaret Mission had constructed a dormitory for girls to protect them from these tribal elders. However, the latter often did not accept the decision.

> The old men of the tribe realized that they would not be given these girls to share among themselves, and, fortified by encouragement from the whites in the district, they frightened the mothers into taking their daughters out of the home back to the camp again.[91]

There were also cases where young Aboriginal men broke into dormitories and sexually assaulted the girls in their beds. The Anglican missionary, Sister Eileen Heath, described one incident in August 1944 when she was employed at the government's Moore River Settlement.

[89] Mary Bennett, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 19 March 1934, transcript p 224

[90] Perez, *Kalumburu*, p 85

[91] Mary Bennett, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 19 March 1934, transcript p 216

> Eight working boys from the camps were discovered after midnight in two dormitories occupied by girls from 8 to 14 years of age and working girls respectively ... Since then [one] girl had spent several days in hospital following the dormitory episode with the eight boys.

Heath said this was but one incident in an institution that by then had 'simply developed into an all night and all day brothel'.[92]

Another major objective of the missionaries was to inculcate in children the health and hygiene habits required for settled living. The dormitories provided the only practical space where children could acquire these habits and make them routine. Historians often treat this kind of instruction as the product of religious zeal but it was essential for preventing disease. Tribal Aborigines attributed disease and ill health to the working of sorcery. Converting children to habits of keeping themselves and their clothing clean and using closet toilets located at a safe distance from the water supply protected them from many deadly infectious diseases of the time. Where these habits were ignored, as they often were in the early days of mission settlements, the outcome was an outbreak of sometimes fatal disease. In 1887 at the Murray River Mission at Maloga, dysentery carried off an unspecified number of children and old people.[93] In 1889, typhoid fever at the Cumeroogunga Mission took the lives of six children aged from one to two years and one 20-year-old woman. The government health officer for the Moama district, Dr George Eakins, found the Aboriginal camp at the mission so unsanitary he ordered it closed down and moved a mile away.

> There is no street or other drainage, the earth in and about the dwellings being saturated with domestic liquid refuse ... In the new camp I have advised that a portion of the camp be dug out and used as a latrine, and that no excreta of any kind be deposited except in those trenches, so as to prevent the camp becoming like the old one'[94]

Changing the personal habits from those appropriate to nomadic life to those required by permanent settlement was one of the missionaries' major objectives.

Overall, the claim that mission dormitories were sites for the destruction of Aboriginal culture is both wrong and beside the point. The children in these dormitories were the least likely to inherit the culture of traditional nomadic life. They either had no tribally inte-

[92] Letter to Anglican Archdeacon Storr, cited by Annette Roberts, *Sister Eileen: A Life with the Lid Off*, Access Press, Bassendean, 2002, pp 103–4

[93] *Thirteenth Report of the Maloga Mission Station*, p 5

[94] Medical Attendants to Aborigines at Cummeragunga Mission Station, 31 July 1889, in *Votes and Proceedings and Papers Laid Upon the Table of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales During the Session of 1889*, pp 663–72

grated parents or their mothers had willingly abandoned nomadic society for the refuge of mission settlements.

MISSIONS AND CHILDREN: AN EVALUATION

Today, when intellectual fashions decree that whites have no business trying to educate indigenes in Western ways of thought and behaviour, let alone commit the even greater sacrilege of trying to convert them to the Christian religion, any defence of the early missionaries is likely to fall on deaf ears. Most modern intellectuals believe the Aborigines should have been left to practise unimpaired their ancient culture as nomadic hunter-gatherers. At best, missionary interventions are portrayed today as an insufferable cultural arrogance; at worst, a form of cultural genocide.

It is true the missionaries were far from perfect. In 1937, during a debate in the Western Australian parliament over new regulations to license missions and control their activities, Chief Secretary W. H. Kitson provided a list of what he called shameful incidents on the state's missions over the previous ten years. They included drunkenness, cruelty, homosexuality, prostitution and violence.[95] Although, he declined to name the individuals or institutions involved, there was already enough public evidence of activities of this kind at Forrest River to give credibility to at least some of the charges.

More specific allegations were made by government medical inspectors about the quality of the diet provided on missions. While some in northern and central Australia overcame the harsh climate to establish self-sufficient agricultural communities, raising cattle and goats and growing sweet potato, cassava, rice, corn, fruit and vegetables,[96] others so mismanaged their affairs that at certain seasons the food supply all but ran out, leaving their residents severely malnourished. During the long drought that afflicted much of outback Australia in the late 1920s, medical inspectors reported Aborigines on several missions suffering from diseases of dietary insufficiency, including beriberi and scurvy. 'The main article of diet seems to be a kind of "soup" made from flour,' one doctor reported about the Hermannsburg Mission in Central Australia. 'There is also a lack of fresh vegetables, and of milk for the babies and younger children. There have already been about twenty deaths.' At Groote Eylandt, the supply of food was 'hopelessly inadequate, ill-balanced and dep-

[95] Pat Jacobs, *Mister Neville*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 1990, p 263

[96] Murray Seiffert, *Refuge on the Roper: The Origins of the Roper River Mission Ngukurr*, Acorn Press, Melbourne, 2008, p 127; see also Markus, *Governing Savages*, p 85, for Oenpelli Mission, Arnhem Land, in 1934

lorably monotonous; with breakfast comprising bread, water and rice porridge, destitute of sugar, milk or any other ingredient'.[97] However, Andrew Markus, who reported these conditions, also observed of the majority of missions: 'arguably, they provided better food and medical attention than was to be found on most cattle stations and living conditions generally were far superior than on the fringes of towns'.[98]

One of the most enduring legacies of the missions was the production of a culture of dependence. Even some missions that aimed to be self-sufficient followed the example set by the government and left their residents with a reliance on welfare handouts for food, clothing and accommodation, while requiring the able-bodied men to do little more than a few chores about the place. This phenomenon, which now dominates life on Aboriginal remote communities, has had so much analysis in recent years that it needs little elaboration here. However, there is one example from the Hermannsburg mission that deserves repeating for its poignancy. In his 1935 annual report, the Lutheran Pastor Friedrich Wilhelm Albrecht wrote in despair:

> Years ago mothers with small children were allotted goats for milk, but looking after them proved too much for the majority and the goats soon scattered in all directions. Men had to be employed to muster the goats again, a yard was built about two miles away, a man and his wife appointed as shepherds on full rations, and mothers with babies who have nothing else to do were asked to go there and get the milk. But even this seemed to entail too much hard work and they would rather see the babies go without milk than go and get it for themselves.[99]

And yet, on the other hand, failures of this kind are more than matched by the fact that the great majority of Aboriginal professional people who have emerged since the 1950s were the products of missions. The missionaries sought out the most talented boys and girls at their schools and ensured that many of them went on to a high school education in the major cities and, later, to the universities. It is heavily ironic that the most politically outspoken of those Aborigines who benefited from this social mobility subsequently advanced their careers by appealing for the restoration of traditional culture. Few of them realized that the very idea of having a career, of progressing through life and being responsible for your own successes and failures, was not something inherent in their talents, let alone a notion they thought up themselves. The idea that human beings can be something

[97] Markus, *Governing Savages*, pp 85–7
[98] Markus, *Governing Savages*, p 84
[99] Hermannsburg Mission, 1935 annual report, cited by Markus, *Governing Savages*, p 82

more than units in a collectivity, where their place was fixed and their future determined, has only arisen in societies that recognize that every individual life matters. That notion made no sense at all in traditional Aboriginal culture. As Mary Bennett reminded Henry Moseley in her evidence to his Royal Commission in 1934, that idea was bequeathed to Western society by the Christian teaching of the intrinsic value of every human being.[100]

In other words, in a profound sense, the missionaries accomplished what they set out to do, that is, to bring Christianity and civilization to the world of the tribal nomads. Of course, given the small proportion of the indigenous population they were able to influence, the missions could hardly be credited with this all by themselves. In most of Australia, the pastoralists of the expanding white frontier influenced customs, manners and behaviour far more. But, in their own realm, the missions were certainly more culturally constructive than government officials of their era who preferred to leave full-blood Aborigines under customary law, thereby preserving intact many of the practices the missionaries fought against, especially the propensity to violence, the 'property status' of women, and sex with children.

Today, the fading memory of the missionaries' achievements among the very old inhabitants of the communities they founded still remains a rebuke to the squalid failures of the system of government-funded self-determination that replaced them. As well as bringing the Gospel, the missionaries imposed the discipline required for acquiring literacy and numeracy and for gaining a passable primary school education. They liberated the Aboriginal women in their care by persuading them their bodies belonged to them, not to their husbands or fathers, and that they had the right to consent to whom they married. They demonstrated to mothers and their daughters that it was wrong, both morally and physically, for girls of eight and nine years of age to be forced to have sex with adult men. They showed them there could be alternatives to marriage to aged violent husbands. They encouraged people to maintain the standard of hygiene required to prevent fatal diseases in a settled society. The more experienced of them demonstrated how to replace the old nomadic economy with a village life based on modern agriculture. They provided shelter for orphans and homeless children, particularly the half-castes who were wanted by neither mainstream white or black society. The notion that to accomplish these ends they contributed to the Stolen Generations is manifestly untrue, and the historians who make such a claim should not be believed.

[100] Mary Bennett, evidence to Moseley Royal Commission, 19 March 1934, transcript p 220

CHAPTER TEN

Part-Aborigines in the Northern Territory

By the late 1920s, the government's policy of removal had become more strict and purposeful. Under the direction of Dr Cecil Cook, the Chief Protector of Aboriginals from 1927 to 1939, policemen gathered up children 'from Port Keats to the Petermann Ranges' for placement in the Bungalow, Kahlin or the church missions.

The policy became more strict because the white people of the Territory feared that they would be outnumbered by the growing part-descent population. They believed that part-descent children might 'resort to savagery' if left in the Aboriginal camps or 'drift to become a menace to society'.

Dr Cook believed that the best way to prevent such problems was to eventually eradicate the part-descent population. He thought this could be achieved by removing part-descent girls from Aboriginal camps and educating them to a standard which would allow them to marry white men.

— Rowena MacDonald, *Between Two Worlds*, 1995[1]

The written records and photographs which make up this book together create a compelling picture of the benevolent inhumanity of man to man — a part of history which we need to know to better understand our present.

— Justice Robert French, President Native Title Tribunal, 1995, cover endorsement for Rowena MacDonald's *Between Two Worlds*

[1] Rowena MacDonald, *Between Two Worlds: The Commonwealth Government and the Removal of Aboriginal Children of Part Descent in the Northern Territory*, IAD Press, Alice Springs, 1995, p 20

IN 1993, to mark the United Nation's International Year of the World's Indigenous People, one of the many programs sponsored by the Australian government was an exhibition about Aborigines compiled from records in the Australian Archives. It opened at the Australian Museum, Sydney, in October 1993 and then toured every state. It was the first national tour staged by the Archives and, for an organization that previously had only limited public contact, its most adventurous promotional exercise ever. It appointed a staff of twelve to research and mount the exhibition. The Archives subsequently described the project a great success. It visited fifteen venues around Australia and was seen by half a million people.[2]

To meet the demand generated, especially from schoolteachers, in 1995 the Archives published the archival documents, the curator's text and the exhibition's photographs as a book entitled *Between Two Worlds*. Author of the book and curator of the exhibition, Rowena MacDonald, said when she got the job she found it hard to decide the content. Until 1967, when a referendum changed the constitution to allow the Commonwealth to make national laws for Aboriginal people, the states had most responsibility for legislation and management of Aboriginal affairs. Consequently, the individual state archives, rather than the national archives, held the great bulk of pre-1967 government records. The one place where the Commonwealth did have direct responsibility in this period was the Northern Territory. MacDonald approached academic historians seeking suggestions for Territory themes her exhibition might pursue.

She soon came across Peter Read who persuaded her not to try to cover the whole of government–Aboriginal relations in the Territory but to focus the entire display on the Stolen Generations. She subsequently appointed Read the project's 'curatorial adviser', and he guided its development every step of the way. MacDonald wrote:

> During initial discussions, Dr Peter Read, a historian at the Australian National University, suggested that the story of the government-run 'half-caste' institutions documented in these Northern Territory records might make a stimulating theme. Throughout the development of the exhibition which saw his original idea eventually realized as *Between Two Worlds*, Dr Read provided guidance, encouragement and invaluable expert advice.[3]

[2] http://www.naa.gov.au/whats-on/exhibitions/past-exhibitions/between-two-worlds.aspx; see also Rowena MacDonald, 'Between Two Worlds: The Commonwealth Government and the Removal of Aboriginal Children of Part Descent in the Northern Territory — An Australian Archives Exhibition', *Aboriginal History*, 18, 1994

[3] MacDonald, *Between Two Worlds*, p ix

Unfortunately for the reputation of the national archives, as well as taking Read's ideas and advice MacDonald also adopted the historical method he used in his own work on the Stolen Generations. That is, she only selected documents, or fragments of documents, that supported her case, while ignoring those, even from the same source, that questioned or contradicted the line she decided to take. She reproduced apparently embarrassing quotations from government officials out of their historical context. She avoided publishing statistics of child removals that were available in the archives which would have questioned her case. And she embedded within her work an interpretation that grossly distorted the extent of removals, the climate in which this took place, and the intentions of those who did the removing.

For example, MacDonald began her discussion of Commonwealth intentions and policy by placing the following quotation at the head of one chapter: 'No half-caste children should be allowed to remain in any native camp.' This was half of a sentence taken from a report written in 1913 by the anthropologist Baldwin Spencer, the first Chief Protector of Aboriginal in the Northern Territory. It appeared to support a policy of permanently removing half-caste children from other Aboriginal people. Out of context and framed within a presentation about Stolen Generations, the quotation distorted Spencer's meaning completely. His report had previously made clear what he meant by 'aboriginal camps' when he criticized the alcoholism, drug abuse and prostitution of camps on the edge of white settlements. The solution he advocated did *not* involve removing half-castes from other Aborigines. Rather, he wanted to put them on reserves segregated not from one another but from the Territory's white and Asian populations who were supplying them with alcohol and opium. In a sentence MacDonald did not quote, Spencer's report recommended his preferred policy for half-castes:

> I have, after consideration of all the facts, come to the conclusion that, except in individual and exceptional cases, the best and kindest thing is to place them on reserves along with the natives, train them in the same schools and encourage them to marry among themselves.[4]

[4] W. Baldwin Spencer, *Preliminary Report on the Aboriginals of the Northern Territory*, 20 May 1913, p 47, included in Northern Territory of Australia, *Report of the Administrator for the Year 1912* (*sic*). In *Bringing Them Home,* the Human Rights Commission also quoted Spencer on this issue, and then gave a patently false account of who he thought half-castes should marry. 'Removed from Aboriginal people of full descent,' said *Bringing Them Home* (p 133), 'they would be schooled, trained and encouraged to marry other "half-castes".' But when Spencer said half-castes should be placed on

The three paragraphs at the start of this chapter, which are from Chapter Five of *Between Two Worlds*, provide a further illustration of how the exhibition misled its readers. MacDonald's portrait of police sweeping the Northern Territory in the late 1920s to stem a rising tide of half-caste children that threatened to swamp the white population was a gross beat-up. She avoided saying precisely how many of these part-descent people were actually rounded up. Yet the information about the very limited extent of removals at the time was fully available to her. Her exhibition included a reproduction of a small part of the report to the Prime Minister about the Northern Territory prepared in 1928 by the Chief Protector of Aboriginals in Queensland, John William Bleakley.[5] Other pages of the same report, which she declined to reproduce, told a very different story.

Bleakley began with an estimate of the total population of Aborigines in the Northern Territory in 1928. There were 21,000 Aboriginal people, of whom 800 were half-castes, both adults and children. As Table 10.1 below shows, of the half-castes, only 200 were inmates of government institutions or missions. Of these, 132 were children, held predominantly at three places, the Half-Caste Home at Darwin (64 children), the Bungalow at Alice Springs (52 children), and the Anglican mission on Groote Eylandt in the Gulf of Carpentaria (16 children).

These half-caste children constituted a mere 0.6 per cent of the Aboriginal population of the Territory at the time, and only a fraction of the then white population of 4500. The alarmist scenarios created by MacDonald's text — the 'resort to savagery' and the 'menace to society' — might impress schoolchildren on a museum excursion but no one who saw the actual figures involved could take them seriously.

Moreover, while these institutions did increase their total intake in the 1930s, the growth was not dramatic. The numbers in the Half-Caste Home in Darwin went from 76 in 1928 to 116 in 1936. In 1937, after a cyclone destroyed the original buildings, the home was relocated to a new site on Bagot Road, Darwin. In 1938, its peak year for attendance, it housed 153 residents, of whom 121 were female.

reserves 'along with *the natives*' he was using a term that at the time clearly referred only to Aboriginal people of full descent. That is, he wanted half-caste and full-blood people to live together on reserves and intermarry.

[5] J. W. Bleakley, *The Aboriginals and Half-Castes of Central Australia and North Australia, Report, 1928*, Parliamentary Paper (Australia), number 21 of 1929, pp 12, 14, 26

The Bleakley report was by no means a whitewash. It spoke frankly about some of the very poor conditions under which some half-castes were housed. After he inspected the Bungalow at Alice Springs, Bleakley immediately agreed:

> (a) the buildings are unsuitable;
> (b) the present site is also unsuitable;
> (c) immediate removal is highly desirable.[6]

At the same time, conditions at the Bungalow came under the scrutiny of the journalists from southern newspapers, especially the *Bulletin* in Sydney and the *Daily Mail* in Brisbane. There was no doubt the conditions there had become appalling. Press photographs showed inmates sleeping on the ground in poorly ventilated cast-iron sheds, with not enough blankets to go around on freezing central Australian winter nights. This was one thing that Rowena MacDonald's book did get right.[7]

The criticism stung the authorities into closing down the dilapidated premises and moving to a temporary site at Jay Creek. At the same time, most of the half-caste boys at the Darwin home were transferred to other temporary premises at Pine Creek. Two years later, in 1933, when the Bungalow returned to Alice Springs and to new premises in the former Telegraph Station, its numbers increased from 52 to 114, of whom 28 were boys from Pine Creek. By 1938, the Bungalow housed 127 half-caste children.[8] They were a long way short of outnumbering the white population.

The new accommodation at the Bagot Compound in Darwin could not have been all that bad. During the Second World War, the government evacuated its Aboriginal population and the Australian Army requisitioned the buildings for use as a military hospital and as barracks for units engaged in the defence of Darwin.[9] In other words, under wartime conditions, Australian defence forces accepted the same standard of accommodation the authorities had provided for Aborigines.

[6] Bleakley. *The Aboriginals and Half-castes of Central Australia and North Australia*, p 17

[7] MacDonald, *Between Two Worlds*, pp 29–31. One of Australia's great journalists, M. H. Ellis, set the agenda for this story in the *Daily Mail*.

[8] The figures all come from the annual *Report of the Administration of the Northern Territory*: 1933, pp 8–9; 1936, p 14; 1938, p 25

[9] *Report on the Administration of the Northern Territory for the Year 1945–46*, p 27

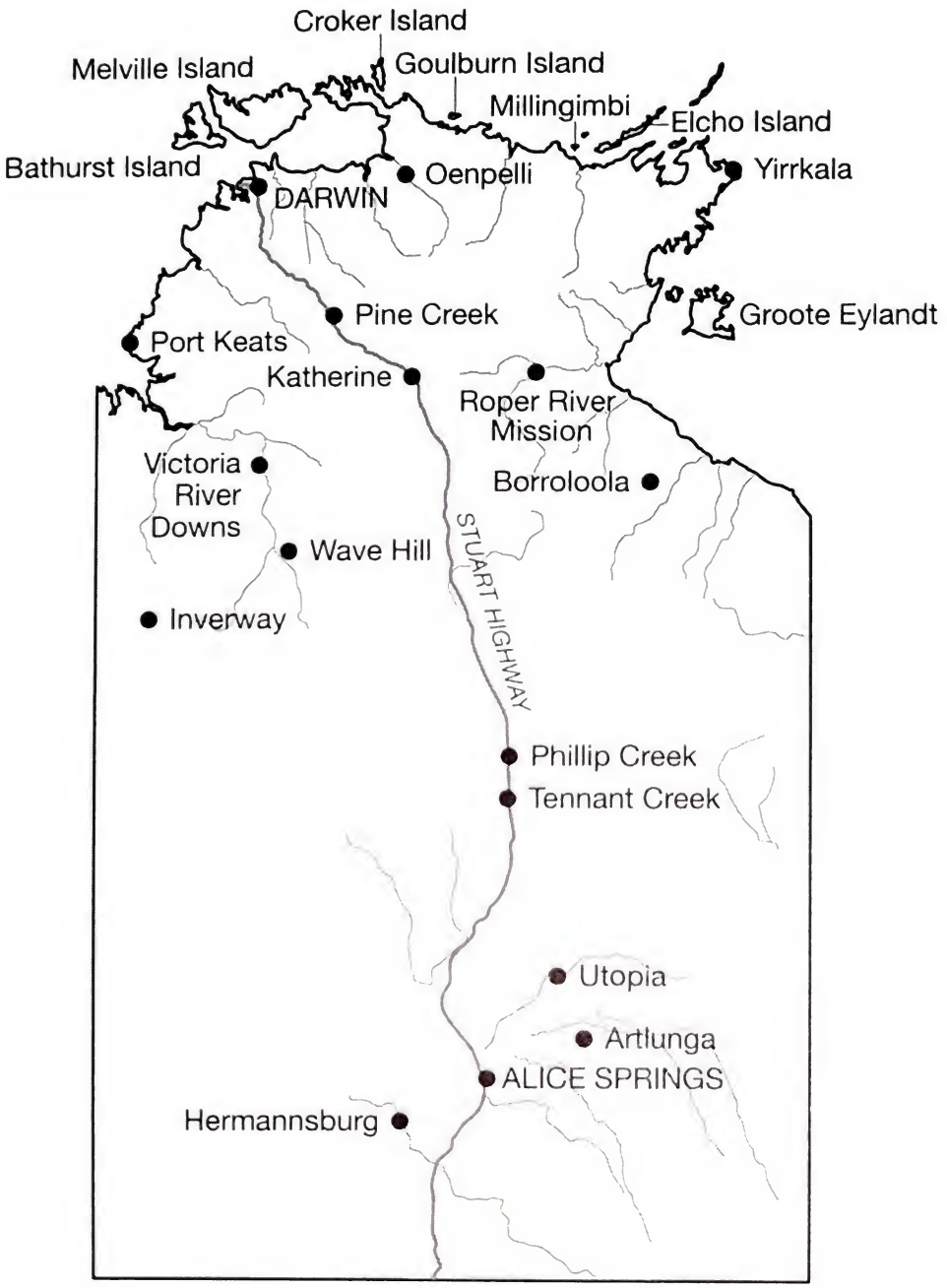
TABLE 10.1: ABORIGINES AT GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS AND RELIGIOUS MISSIONS IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY, 1928

Name and location	*Founding organization*	*Number of children*	*Number of half-caste Aborigines, all ages*	*Number of full-blood Aborigines, all ages*
Kahlin Compound, Darwin*	Territory government	n/a	n/a	200
Half-Caste Home, Darwin	Territory government	64	76	–
Half-Caste Bungalow, Alice Springs**	Territory government	52	64	–
Bathurst Island Mission, Timor Sea	Roman Catholic Church	98	8	150
Goulburn Island Mission, Arafura Sea, Arnhem Land	Methodist Church	49	5	153
Millingimbi Mission, Crocodile Islands, Arnhem Land	Methodist Church	88	–	290
Oenpelli Mission, Arnhem Land	Church of England	43	–	91
Roper River Mission, Gulf of Carpentaria	Church of England	32	1	51
Groote Eylandt Mission, Gulf of Carpentaria	Church of England	16	34	4
Hermannsburg Mission, central Australia	Lutheran Church	93	12	211

Table 10.1 Source: J. W. Bleakley, *The Aboriginals and Half-Castes of Central Australia and North Australia, Report, 1928*, Parliamentary Paper (Australia), number 21 of 1929, pp 12, 14, 26.

* Separate numbers for children and half-castes at the Kahlin Compound were not published in Bleakleys's report.

** The majority at the Bungalow were half-caste children but some were older and of workforce age. Bleakley said twelve of the inmates, 'between the ages of 13 and 30' should be sent out to employment (page 17).



Northern Territory 1910–1960, showing locations of major missions, homes for children and other places mentioned in text.

THE INTENTIONS OF THE AUTHORITIES IN THE PRE-WAR PERIOD

According to Bleakley, there were two major reasons why the government established its two homes for half-caste children. The first was the growth of Aboriginal employment in Darwin in the early twentieth century. The second was the prostitution of girls in Aboriginal fringe camps.

Since its foundation, Darwin had been a centre for distribution of rations and clothing to indigent local Aborigines. This arrangement gradually evolved into a local employment market with a number of Aborigines engaged to perform domestic labour. To prevent them succumbing to the temptations of alcohol and night life in Darwin, and also because of a well-founded concern that such activities would increase their disease burden and social dislocation, the administration introduced regulations to curtail their freedom of movement. It could do this because the Northern Territory Aboriginals Act of 1910 and the Aboriginals Ordinances of 1911 and 1918, designed primarily to allow the Territory government to move people onto the segregated reserves it was then creating, gave officials control over the movement of Aboriginal people throughout the north. In fact, under these ordinances, the Chief Protector and his successor, the Director of Native Affairs, was the legal guardian of every Aboriginal person in the Territory, of whatever age. In the municipality of Darwin, the government introduced a dawn-to-dusk curfew for Aborigines and established accommodation where Aboriginal workers could remain overnight. During his stint as Chief Protector in 1911–12, Baldwin Spencer selected six acres adjoining Kahlin Beach, about two miles from town. It became known as the Kahlin Compound. Bleakley's report described the rationale behind it and the controls to which its inmates were subjected.

> The presence of the compound at Darwin has been made necessary by the fact that, owing to climatic and other conditions, life in Darwin for many of the white families would be almost impossible without some cheap domestic labour, and the aboriginal is the only suitable labour of the kind procurable ... As the introduction of aboriginals as domestic labour was unavoidable, it therefore became necessary to provide effective protection while so employed, and a home for them while idle. As many employers proved unable to control and protect them at night, the rule now is that these servants, male and female, must return to the compound before dark and stay there until morning. No native is allowed in the towns of Darwin and Parap between sunset and sunrise, without a permit, and, by regulation, is liable to arrest and punishment if disobeying this order.[10]

[10] Bleakley, *The Aboriginals and Half-Castes of Central Australia and North Australia*, p 12

The compound initially provided single-room cottages for its inhabitants who in the 1920s numbered about 120. A medical clinic was added in 1914. It usually admitted and discharged about 120 patients a year, most from 'up country' districts.[11] The same year a children's home was added. Most of its children were the offspring of parents who lived in the compound and who worked in the town during the day. The home functioned as a crèche and school by day and a children's dormitory by night. Until 1924 it was located within the Kahlin Compound and no attempt was made to separate children from their parents. Indeed, at any one time, up to a dozen mothers, mostly young unmarried part-Aboriginal women, slept there at night with their children. The children's dormitory became known as the Half-Caste Home because the great majority of its children were of part-descent.

In 1924 it was relocated about 100 metres from the compound, next to the residence of the superintendent and matron. At the same time, the compound expanded to provide dormitories for the unmarried mothers of children in the home. By 1928, demand for children's accommodation had grown to the point where the Half-Caste Home's sole building was seriously overcrowded. Bleakley said it then accommodated nine adults, three girls aged between sixteen and nineteen, and 64 children aged from eleven years down to four months. All were part-Aboriginal, mainly part-European but also some of Chinese, Maori and 'Asiatic' descent.[12]

The reason for the growth in numbers was that by this time the home was also functioning as a welfare institution for orphaned and destitute children and for half-caste children sent by parents to Darwin to get an education. At the time, the latter group was not large. In 1928, only three such children were being supported financially by their fathers. Since Baldwin Spencer's tenure, the Chief Protector had also targeted for removal half-caste children found in the camps of tribal Aborigines. Their numbers had been growing, Bleakley said, 'as a result of the policy in the past of rescuing half-caste children from the camps and sending them to a home for care and education'.[13]

The majority of the children 'rescued' in this last way were female. In 1928, the Half-Caste Home's population contained 56 girls and young women, but only 20 boys. By 1938, the ratio was 121 females to 32 males. Included in the 1938 figure for females were 36 half-

[11] Northern Territory, *Report of the Acting Administrator for the Year Ended 30th June 1926*, p 14

[12] Bleakley, *The Aboriginals and Half-Castes of Central Australia and North Australia*, p 14

[13] Bleakley, *The Aboriginals and Half-Castes of Central Australia and North Australia*, p 14

caste women who were inmates of the 'lock hospital' for venereal disease patients.[14] Bleakley said one reason more females than males were 'rescued' was because of

> the practice of not removing the young males if the Protector is satisfied they are being looked after on the stations. As these young half-castes make useful station labour at an early age, the employers are reluctant to part with them.[15]

But the overwhelming reason for the disparity was the desire of the authorities to remove girls from camps adjoining cattle stations and white settlements where they were vulnerable to prostitution and sexual abuse. Bleakley's report described the prevailing environment.

> *Prostitution of the Women.*— Frequently, in accordance with tribal custom, the old men have young lubras as wives, so there is usually a number of young children about the camps. One deplorable result of the semi-starvation that often exists is, that the women find the temptation to supplement their meagre resources by trading in prostitution too strong to withstand. As practically all public roads lead through the stations, and the camps are of necessity in the vicinity, these simple women are easy prey to passing travellers, who, at times, are low enough to cheat them by paying them with bogus money, in the way of painted coins, advertisement coupons, and worthless cheque forms.
>
> *Difficulty in Checking Prostitution.*— Employers with some sense of responsibility for the care of the camp, and also for the health f their own community, have attempted to check this evil, but, lacking the authority to take firm action, have simply been defied, and at times threatened with violence for not 'minding their own business'. It was complained that motor car loads of men from bush townships or construction camps bent on 'ginsprees', in other words drink and prostitution orgies, had given trouble on stations even 100 miles distant. The manager on one station complained that he had even been compelled to display firearms to protect himself from such a party, who resented his interference.[16]

In making this point, Bleakley was not alone. Previous government officials had long made the same observations. In 1915, J. T. Beckett, then the Territory's Chief Inspector of Aboriginals, reported on his observations after a 3000-mile tour between Darwin and Alice Springs. Beckett was plainly not an endorser of racial stereotypes but still wanted half-caste girls removed from all the Territory's fringe camps:

[14] *Report of the Administration of the Northern Territory for Year 1937–38*, p 25
[15] Bleakley, *The Aboriginals and Half-Castes of Central Australia and North Australia*, p 14
[16] Bleakley, *The Aboriginals and Half-castes of Central Australia and North Australia*, p 9

> The half-caste girl who remains with the tribe anywhere in the vicinity of a civilised settlement has one inevitable destiny, and that the most degraded.
>
> It is freely stated that all half-castes are morally worthless; that the taint is in them, and that it must inevitably manifest itself. This, in my opinion, is cruelly false, and in nearly every case uttered without thought. That the half-caste girl without proper protection is more likely to become degraded than a white girl goes without saying, for she runs the risk, when the time and opportunity are favourable, of being actually sold by her tribal relatives for prostitution or taken away by force by some unscrupulous man who keeps her just as long as he cares to do so. When half-caste girls have been given a fair chance and kindly treatment they do not go wrong; in fact, they exhibit a plain repulsion to follow any such sort of life. In cases where half-caste girls are living in open immorality, the history if looked into proves the impossibility of the girl taking any other course.[17]

The girls removed from such conditions were all half-caste. Full-blood girls were never targeted for removal but instead left to the fate decreed by tribal practice. In the Northern Territory, the administration adopted this policy for the same reasons the previous chapter outlined for Western Australia at the same time, and for Queensland in the late nineteenth century. The overall objective was to preserve inviolate what remained of traditional society. This meant establishing large reserves, prohibiting white entry, banning alcohol and opium, and enacting punitive laws for white men who had sex with Aboriginal women. Full-blood children could not be removed from their communities, not matter how much the white authorities disapproved of the conditions under which they lived.

Obviously, this choice involved a form of racial discrimination. Because most half-caste children were half white, they were favoured for removal or, in the terminology of the time, of being 'given a chance' to gain education and training. It is equally true, however, that the policy of retaining full-blood people on reserves meant half-castes were the only children who could be removed. Bleakley himself proposed that only children of one-quarter or one-eighth descent be subject to removal[18] but his recommendation did not change the existing policy.

As I also argued in Chapter Seven, there was little support among those in authority in northern Australia for the proposition that full-

[17] J. T. Beckett to Chief Protector of Aboriginals, *Report on Aboriginals*, 19 June 1915, in Northern Territory of Australia, *Report of the Administrator for the Year 1914–15*, p 28

[18] Bleakley, *The Aboriginals and Half-castes of Central Australia and North Australia*, p 17

blood Aborigines were a dying race. This was especially so in the Northern Territory in the 1920s and 1930s, where full-blood Aborigines were the largest population group, easily outnumbering all other ethic groups combined, and accounting for more than two-thirds of the Territory's total population. Hence the notion popularized by the historians of the Stolen Generations that, by removing half-caste children and allowing the full-bloods to die off of their own accord, the government could somehow engineer the eradication of the entire Aboriginal race, made even less sense in the Territory than anywhere else.

In the regime established in the Territory after the Bleakley report, the biggest single issue in policy was, as it had been in Western Australia, controlling the spread of disease among the Aboriginal population. Again, this explained the concern about prostitution and promiscuity of Aboriginal women. Public health was a much greater issue than Victorian-era Puritanism. Although the policy proposals of Cecil Cook and J. W. Bleakley were poles apart, Cook got the job as Chief Protector because of his track record in Aboriginal health. He was a qualified medical practitioner who had spent much of the 1920s in Western Australia investigating the extent of tropical diseases and advising the government on policy responses, especially to hookworm and leprosy. In 1927 he wrote the book *The Epidemiology of Leprosy in Australia*, the first Australian study of that disease based on field research.[19] During his tenure in the Territory, the Chief Protector of Aborigines was also the Chief Medical Officer because, as one administrator explained: 'the question of aboriginal protection was very largely interwoven with medical service and hygiene and that, therefore, the duties of the two offices were to some extent complementary.'[20] Only after Cook's appointment ended in 1939 did the responsible Minister, John McEwen, separate the Territory's Aboriginal Branch from its medical services.

THE MOTIVES OF THE MISSIONARIES

Missionaries were the white people who intervened most into traditional Aboriginal culture and society. The first missionaries in the Northern Territory were members of the Lutheran Church in Germany who went to central Australia and established several settlements between the 1860s and 1880s. The Hermannsburg Missionary

[19] Cecil Cook, *The Epidemiology of Leprosy in Australia: Being the Report of an Investigation in Australia During the Years 1923–1925 Under the Terms of the Wandsworth Research Scholarship of the London School of Tropical Medicine*, Government Printer, Canberra, 1927

[20] *Report of the Administration of the Northern Territory for Year 1938–39*, p 22

Society in 1877 founded a mission on the Finke River, about 130 miles west of Alice Springs, which survived until 1982. Australian churches only became seriously active in the Territory in the early twentieth century when the major denominations decided to establish their presence in the far north, around the coasts of Arnhem Land and the Gulf of Carpentaria.

Despite the tropical climate and tropical diseases that took the lives of a number of them and their children, the second wave of missionaries found the Northern Territory a powerful magnet. By 1928, there were seven missions in the Territory. As Table 10.1 shows, that year they accommodated 419 children, substantially more than the two government institutions. Most of these children were of full descent. At this time, there was neither government policy nor missionary intention to remove children to missions without their parents. Almost all those who came in to the missions did so with their parents, or at least their mothers. As in the north of Western Australia, missions were most attractive to mothers who lacked protectors and providers, who had transgressed tribal law by not accepting the husbands to whom they had been betrothed at birth, who were refugees from tribal warfare, or who decided to join a mission community simply in order to have a regular food supply and schooling for their children.

In the Northern Territory, one of the first tasks of a mission was to construct buildings for both the education and accommodation of children. Within a year of the establishment by the Church Missionary Association of the Roper River Mission in 1908, it had constructed a children's dormitory that also served as a church and a school.[21] Their parents lived close by in cottages and tents. One of the more sympathetic mission historians, Murray Seiffert, portrayed this institution in the following terms: 'In many ways the mission might be described as a poverty-stricken copy of an English boarding school, staffed by a few missionaries and parents.'[22] A separate dormitory for boys was constructed later. Not all children went into the dormitories. For those Aboriginal adults who came to be permanent inhabitants and workers for the mission, the staff built small houses for them and their children. Others with less commitment were either housed or camped within a few hundred metres. All up, the total population comprised from five to seven missionaries and about 200 Aboriginal adults and children.[23]

[21] Murray Seiffert, *Refuge on the Roper: The Origins of Roper River Mission Ngukurr*, Acorn Press, Melbourne, 2008, pp 120, 126

[22] Seiffert, *Refuge on the Roper*, p 94

[23] Seiffert, *Refuge on the Roper*, pp 126–8

One of the main reasons for the establishment of the Roper River dormitories was the missionaries' concern about young girls being promised in marriage to very old men who already had three or four wives. Their concern was largely over the very young age at which girls experienced sexual intercourse and pregnancy. They were also disturbed that the girls had no freedom of choice in their husbands, and that these tribal customs inhibited the creation of the kind of Christian community the missionaries sought. In February 1915 the Anglican Bishop of Carpentaria, Gilbert White, addressed the Church Missionary Association on his recent visit to Roper River where he put both these arguments:

> [N]early all the Mission girls are promised from birth to old men as wives, which forms a great difficulty in the way of their marriage to those whom they want to marry, the boys brought up on the Station. To allow them to marry those old camp ruffians is to lose them altogether and to lose all chance of building up a married Christian community. To allow them to marry our boys means probably that they will be speared by the old men, who in any case will regard it as a breach of trust on the part of the Mission, and will refuse to send more children. We have the same trouble at the Mitchell [River Mission].[24]

To prevent this, White suggested that the Church Missionary Association should try to 'purchase' the girls from their betrothed husbands. Among Anglicans, the notion probably smacked too much of slavery and White failed to raise enough funds. However, on the Bathurst Island Mission established by Roman Catholics in 1910, they had more success. As part of an effort to break down the polygamy of the local Tiwi culture, the head of the mission, Father Francis Xavier Gsell, 'bought' 150 potential wives. By educating these girls in Christianity and then encouraging them to marry young men of their own age, he spread his religion.[25]

THE HALF-CASTE COLONY ON GROOTE EYLANDT

In 1924, the only pre-war mission specifically devoted to half-castes in the Northern Territory was established. By this time, the Roper River Mission included 34 part-Aboriginal people among its inhabitants. Some 15 were males and 19 were females, of whom 16 were children still at school. The missionaries decided to move them all to an experimental colony for half-castes on Groote Eylandt in the Gulf of Carpentaria. The island had an existing Aboriginal full-blood pop-

[24] Church Missionary Association, Minutes of Meeting of General Committee, 15 February 1915, cited by Seiffert, *Refuge on the Roper*, p 129

[25] Peter Donovan, 'Francis Xavier Gsell (1872–1960)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 9*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1983, p 135

ulation of about 200, but the new arrivals were kept physically segregated from them. When J. W. Bleakley visited the colony in 1928 he was sceptical about its rationale:

> The wisdom of its selection as a purely half-caste home, however, is open to some question. The missionaries give as their reason for its choice that, when on the mainland at Roper River, considerable trouble was experienced through attempts on the part of whites to induce the girls to run away.[26]

At the time, the central policy debate was whether half-castes would be better off by being treated like full-bloods and kept segregated from the white population, or alternatively, as the then Chief Protector Cecil Cook wanted, integrated within the white population. The missionaries on Groote Eylandt proposed a third alternative that Bleakley felt obliged to comment upon. In his report to the Prime Minister, he condemned it with faint praise:

> The aim of the mission is to give these half-castes vocational training, encourage them to marry among themselves, and then, if they wish, go to employment on stations as married couples or remain on the reserve and maintain themselves by farming small plots. At present there is an excess of females, and, unless more males can be collected, the problem of the future of some of these girls will have to be faced.
>
> The mission's present policy, of segregating the half-castes from both white and black and confining them to marriage amongst themselves, is not regarded as the correct one, nor likely to be successful, for reasons already outlined in the general report. The institution at Groote Eylandt is, however, an interesting experiment and, provided the wider policy as regards the future of the trainees is recognized, might well be given a fair trial.[27]

Bleakley's comments not only undermined government support for this experiment but also for the preferred alternative of Cecil Cook. In his 'reasons already outlined in the general report', Bleakley rejected the notion of government support for any segregated half-caste colony and defended the position that his own investigations had confirmed. Half-caste people should not have their marriage partners prescribed for them, on the one hand, by traditional culture where the girls would become the property of the old men of the local tribe and the boys would have to wait until middle age to have any wives at all, or, on the other hand, by making girls subject to the dictates of the government bureaucracy and married off to white

[26] Bleakley, *The Aboriginals and Half-Castes of Central Australia and North Australia*, p 23

[27] Bleakley, *The Aboriginals and Half-Castes of Central Australia and North Australia*, p 24

men. Instead, Bleakley argued that half-caste people should *make* their own choices. His own research told him where their *preferences* lay:

> Inquiries from all classes of persons with experience of dealing with aboriginal half-castes, such as station owners, missionaries, police &c., only confirm my own opinion that, without appreciable exception, the half-caste of 50 per cent or more aboriginal blood, no matter how carefully brought up and educated, will drift back to the aboriginal, where naturally he finds the atmosphere most congenial to him. Educated Aboriginals and half-castes, who have married back amongst the full bloods on missions and settlements, when questioned, were emphatic in the opinion that these people were happier amongst their own race.[28]

As I recorded in Chapter Seven, Bleakley's position was largely accepted by the Commonwealth government. It defined policy in northern Australia for the next decade. It was adopted in 1934 by J. W. Perkins, the Minister for the Interior in the Lyons government, and confirmed in the House of Representatives. It was a position directly at odds with the claims of all those historians, plus the archivists, political activists, film and television producers who followed them, who have pretended that half-caste girls were removed from their parents to be married off to white men. The publication of Bleakley report as a parliamentary paper ensured that, at the time, the issue was debated openly and comprehensively, especially in the metropolitan newspapers of Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. The only two officials who supported the notion of marrying half-caste women to non-Aborigines, A. O. Neville and Cecil Cook, lost the argument. They were never given either the permission or the resources to put the notion into practice. The historians who claim otherwise are not only demonstrably wrong but have produced one of the great furphies of Australian history.

THE BOMBING OF DARWIN AND THE EVACUATION OF THE ABORIGINES

On19 February 1942, the Japanese bombed Darwin. It was the first of no fewer than 64 air attacks on the city between then and November 1943. In all, the Japanese bombed northern Australia 97 times, attacking Broome, Wyndham, Derby, Katherine, Horn Island, Townsville, Mossman, Port Hedland, Noonamah, Exmouth Gulf, Onslow and Coomalie Creek. They even bombed two Aboriginal missions: Drysdale River in the Kimberley and the Millingimbi in Arnhem Land.

[28] Bleakley, *The Aboriginals and Half-Castes of Central Australia and North Australia*, p 17

The Australian government was aware after Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 that Darwin was a potential target. On 12 December the War Cabinet decided all women and children should be evacuated from the city. The fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942 and the Japanese invasion of the Dutch East Indies and New Guinea made civilian evacuation a matter of some urgency. Before the Japanese bombers arrived, the administration had evacuated from Darwin most people judged non-essential to the war effort. At least 1100 of the 2000 white women and children in the town and suburbs had been evacuated by ship, train and plane. All Aboriginal women and about 20 per cent of Aboriginal men were moved out of the city. [29] Of the Territory's population of half-caste people, at least 500 women and children were evacuated to southern states. On the morning of 19 February 1942 only 100 adult Aboriginal men remained in the Darwin area: 30 employed by the armed forces, 24 prisoners of Darwin's Fanny Bay jail, and the rest in woodcutters' camps on the edge of town.[30] However, a group of 40 half-caste children from the Roman Catholic mission on Melville Island had arrived at Darwin on 15 February and were still in port when the Japanese bombers struck. In his report on these events, the Territory's Administrator, C. L. A. Abbott, wrote:

> At the time of the first raid the Deputy Director, Mr White, and his remaining staff were engaged in packing remaining records and arranging the transfer of half-caste children who had been brought in from Melville Island. Although these children were actually in Darwin during the raid there were no casualties amongst them and they were got away safely the same afternoon.[31]

By late afternoon on 20 February 1942 no Aborigines remained in Darwin.[32]

When he was appointed the new Minister for the Interior in 1938, John McEwen had made a tour of inspection of the Northern Territory. He promised a 'new deal' for Aboriginal people. This began a

[29] *Report on the Administration of the Northern Territory for the year ended 30th June 1942*, p 1

[30] Robert A. Hall, *The Black Diggers: Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the Second World War*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1989, pp 137–8. Hall put the number of half-caste people evacuated from the Territory at 1300 but that was inaccurate since it was more than the total half-caste population, male and female, at the time of 902 (*Report of the Administration of the Northern Territory for 1939–40*, p 18) and most of the 261 half-caste adult males were not evacuated outside the Territory.

[31] *Report on the Administration of the Northern Territory for the year ended 30th June 1942*, pp 1–2

[32] Hall, *Black Diggers*, p 138

radical reorganization of the administration of Aboriginal affairs.[33] McEwen abolished the position of Chief Protector and replaced it with a Director of the Territory's Native Affairs Branch. This position went to E. W. P. Chinnery, the former head of Native Affairs in New Guinea. Chinnery reversed Cook's former disdain for missionaries and decided to hand over care of half-caste children's homes to them. Believing the dormitory system 'obsolete',[34] he funded the missions to establish new accommodation and schools on Melville Island (Roman Catholic), Croker Island (Methodist) and Bagot Road (Aborigines Inland Mission).

The war with Japan, however, interrupted these plans. The Northern Territory came under Army rule. Most of the new mission buildings were quickly taken over by the Army and their inmates evacuated south. Those on Melville Island went to a Catholic institution at Carrieton in the Flinders Ranges of South Australia; those on Croker Island went to the Crusaders Camp Mission Hostel at Otford in New South Wales; and half-castes from the Bagot Reserve and elsewhere in Darwin were transferred to Balaklava in South Australia.[35] Some southern centres took evacuees from a variety of locations. The Sydney branch of the Anglican-based Church Missionary Society accommodated at Ashfield and Mulgoa eleven half-caste women and 35 children, most of whom were the women's offspring. They came from its own Northern Territory missions at Roper River and Groote Eylandt, from the Bungalow in Alice Springs, and also from other Territory missions and government settlements at Borroloola, Mataranka, Darwin, Jay Creek, Newcastle Waters, Tennant Creek, McArthur River, Alexandria and Barrow Creek, plus two boys from Wyndham in Western Australia and Alexandra River in Queensland.[36] A group of older boys went to Tally Ho, a Methodist boys training farm in Victoria.[37]

Civilian control of the Territory was re-established in July 1945. Not until April 1946 did the first of the half-caste evacuees return north. It was a small but intricate logistical exercise. That month, the Catholics from Carrieton went by train to Alice Springs, by road

[33] C. D. Rowley, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society: Aboriginal Policy and Practice, Volume One*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1970, pp 328–32

[34] *Report on the Administration of the Northern Territory for Year 1945–46*, p 31

[35] *Report on the Administration of the Northern Territory for Year 1945-46*, p 30

[36] Australian Aboriginal Genealogy Resources (P. J. Mackett, 2005) Northern Territory, National Archives of Australia, Half-Caste, Coloured and Mission Records, Church Missionary Society — Half-castes 1942–1947, http://mc2.vicnet.net.au/home/pmackett/A431_CMS_Part_a.html

[37] Maisie McKenzie, *Mission to Arnhem Land*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1976, p 122

convoy to Larrimah, by train to Darwin and then by ship to Garden Point on Melville Island. The Methodists left Sydney on the *SS Reynella* and transferred at Darwin to a naval vessel bound for Croker Island. All the evacuees held at Balaklava went by train to Alice Springs and then by motor convoy to Darwin where they lodged temporarily at the Bagot reserve before going off with their families or next of kin to housing in the town. Only unattached children remained at Bagot under the care of the Aborigines Inland Mission. The Bungalow never reopened as a half-caste home but in 1946 the Church of England established a new hostel called St Mary's for half-castes in Alice Springs. [38] Several of the new missions took advantage of buildings constructed by the Army during the war and moved into much larger premises.[39] However, the half-caste colony on Groote Eylandt was not re-established. When the missionaries returned to the island they directed their efforts towards the local full-blood population. The children who went from the Northern Territory and Groote Eylandt to Mulgoa remained there until the Church of England provided alternative accommodation in Alice Springs. Some remained until 1949 when Mulgoa closed, by which time they were either transferred to St Mary's Hostel in Alice Springs, St Francis House in Adelaide or else had become too old to be maintained in a children's home.[40]

One of the evacuated children was Gordon Briscoe, who as an adult became a radical Aboriginal political activist and eventually a research fellow at the Australian National University's Australian Centre for Indigenous History. In 1942, the Northern Territory's Native Affairs Branch despatched him and his mother from the Bungalow in Alice Springs to Mulgoa where the Church Missionary Society housed them for the duration of the war. In 1996, Briscoe recorded a series of interviews for the National Library of Australia's oral history project. In them, he claimed he and his mother were not evacuated to keep them out of harm's way. The real reason, Briscoe claimed, was because 'during World War II Aborigines were seen as possible collaborators with the enemy'.[41]

[38] *Report on the Administration of the Northern Territory for Year 1945-46,* pp 30-1

[39] *Report on the Administration of the Northern Territory for Year 1945-46,* p 29

[40] *Report on the Administration of the Northern Territory for Year 1948–49*, p 21

[41] Introduction to interview with Gordon Briscoe, historian, intellectual and Aboriginal activist (sound recording) / interviewer, Suzanne Edgar 1996, National Library of Australia catalogue: http://nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn2826289. According to the National Library, a condition of gaining access is to request written approval from the interviewee, which means access would be limited to researchers of whom Briscoe approves.

This story does no credit to Briscoe's reputation as an academic historian. There was no plausible collaboration possible between the Japanese military and a 2-year-old boy and his 22-year-old mother from Alice Springs, nor with any of the other 500 mothers and children evacuated at the same time. It is true that one Australian intelligence report made after the outbreak of war with Germany in 1939 did question the loyalty of some Aborigines, particularly those at the German Lutheran missions Hermannsburg in central Australia and Hope Vale in far north Queensland. The military historian Robert Hall devoted a chapter to investigating this issue in his 1989 work, *The Black Diggers: Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the Second Word War.*[42] He argued that the intelligence officer who wrote the report was proven completely wrong when hostilities began in earnest and the Army quickly found the Territory's Aborigines a willing and invaluable labour force. Apart from wanting to save them from Japanese bombs and potential invasion, the other major motive the Administrator had for wanting Aboriginal women removed from Darwin was to prevent them becoming a major source of prostitution for the large number of white labourers and troops brought to the city and northern region by the boom in defence construction.[43]

The Human Rights Commission also described the evacuations in a passage that has just as little credibility. In *Bringing Them Home* it claimed:

> The children were taken to 'homes, rented rural housing and disgraceful makeshift camps' in South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria. They lived there for several years, far from their families and communities. In 1946 some but not all of these children returned to the Territory. Some went 'missing'. Others were refused financial assistance by either the Commonwealth or the State governments to return to the Territory.[44]

The report offered no evidence to support the charge that some went missing. And as far as their accommodation was concerned, most Aboriginal evacuees were placed in premises that previously housed white children, white families, or ministers of the church. At Mulgoa, the children were put up in the rectory of St Thomas's church. At Balaclava in South Australia, the Native Affairs Branch rented five farmhouses for its women and children. 'The townspeople of Balaklava rallied to the cause,' according to oral interviews rec-

[42] Hall, *Black Diggers*, Chapter Six

[43] Hall, *Black Diggers*, pp 136–7

[44] *Bringing Them Home*, p 141. It cited its source for this claim as the book by Tony Austin, *I Can Picture the Old Home So Clearly: The Commonwealth and Half-caste Youth in the Northern Territory 1911–1939*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1993, p 215

orded later by Barbara Cummings, 'providing all that was necessary to make life as comfortable for the evacuees.'[45] The only 'makeshift' accommodation was at the Balaclava racecourse, which the government rented for the initial contingent of evacuees, housing the women and children beneath the grandstand and the few men in the stables. It also provided the site with a four-bed hospital, school house, dining room, electricity and hot water, which was more than most evacuees had ever enjoyed at home. At the same time, Balaclava also accommodated in similarly improvised premises the wives and families of British troops evacuated after the fall of Singapore.[46]

Meanwhile, back in the Northern Territory, more than 200,000 white servicemen and women bedded down in tents. Many had come to the railhead at Alice Springs by train, some of them travelling in cattle trucks. During the war, such improvised accommodation and transport was not unusual. We can be confident no Aboriginal people ever went to or from the Territory by cattle truck. If they had, the Human Rights Commission today would be milking the symbol for all it was worth.

Indeed, under the circumstances, some of the Aboriginal evacuees fared very well. The increased demand for labour meant women sent to South Australia found jobs both in Balaklava and Adelaide and 'experienced a sense of personal freedom for the first time'.[47] Some of the children did even better. For eighteen months, seven boys at Mulgoa were transferred to the church rectory at Mount Wilson in the Blue Mountains where they lived with an Anglican priest and his wife, and attended the local primary school.[48] The village of Mount Wilson had long been one of the most exclusive, expensive and beautiful rural retreats in all Australia, a haven for Sydney's rich and for wealthy outback graziers in the pre-war era. 'I think it must have been quite costly to keep us there,' John Moriarty later recalled, 'although the fact that we were living in a home, almost a family unit in Mount Wilson, was especially good for us younger boys.'[49]

In fact, some of the evacuees became so fond of their conditions in the south they didn't want to leave. In 1945, the Sydney press took up the cause of children sent by the Methodist Church to Otford, south of Sydney. During their three-year stay they had become well-liked in the local school and community. Some of them, especially

[45] Barbara Cummings, *Take This Child: From Kahlin Compound to the Retta Dixon Home*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1990, p 48

[46] Cummings, *Take This Child*, p 48

[47] Cummings, *Take This Child*, p 51

[48] John Moriarty with Evan McHugh, *Saltwater Fella*, Viking, Ringwood, 2000, pp 50–9

[49] Moriarty, *Saltwater Fella*, P 52

14-year-old Betty Fisher who won a singing contest on the national radio program *Australia's Amateur Hour* (the then equivalent of today's *Australian Idol*), felt they had a more promising future in the metropolis than back on Croker Island in the Arafura Sea. However, the Labor government's Minister for the Interior, Vic Johnson, would brook no exceptions and decreed she and the others must all return.[50]

In January 1949, when the last of the Mulgoa mothers and children were being repatriated to central Australia, they created another *cause célèbre* when 14-year-old Joyce Herbert refused to get aboard the train to Alice Springs. Her mother was employed in Sydney and Joyce told reporters she wanted to remain a student at Penrith High School to complete the Leaving Certificate, a qualification not available to her in the Northern Territory. Residents from the Penrith and Mulgoa district joined the Church of England in giving her and the other Mulgoa evacuees vocal and political support to remain. A sympathetic white family hid the girl from Territory authorities.

The issue became a front-page story in the press. Editorials condemned the Chifley government for its heartlessness: 'These children have grown up on the outskirts of Sydney, mixing freely with whites and have acquitted themselves magnificently,' wrote the popular magazine *Pix*. 'None of them wants to leave the only real home they know.'[51] Press photographers and reporters besieged the children as they boarded their train at Sydney, and similar scenes greeted them when they arrived at Melbourne, Adelaide and Alice Springs. Aboriginal activist Bill Onus joined the cause, assisting a protest demonstration in the Sydney Domain organized by the Penrith Chamber of Commerce. The Trades and Labour Council of New South Wales and the Sheet Metal Workers' Union both sent their concerns to the Chifley government. This time, Vic Johnson caved in and allowed Joyce and her mother to stay, and a few others from the now notorious train to rejoin her.[52]

In 1949, Gordon Briscoe and another Mulgoa evacuee, John Moriarty, were sent to Adelaide to join the small group of half-caste boys recently accommodated by the Anglican priest Percy Smith at St

[50] *Sunday Telegraph*, 7 April 1945, p 5

[51] *Pix*, 11 September 1948, also *Daily Telegraph*, Sydney, 29 January 1949, pp 2, 3, 5; 30 January 1949, p 3; 31 January 1949, p 5; 2 February 1949, pp 1, 4; 4 February 1949, p 7; 14 February 1949, p 8

[52] The story is an intriguing one, not only for its insight into post-war race relations but also Church of England politics, with a sharp division between High Church adherents of the Australian Board of Missions in the Northern Territory and Low Church protestors from the Church Missionary Society in Sydney. A very good account is in Annette Roberts, *Sister Eileen: A Life with the Lid Off*, Access Press, Bassendean, 2002, pp 158–73

Francis House.[53] As Chapter Six recorded in its account of the biography of Charles Perkins, St Francis House probably produced more high-achieving Aboriginal graduates per head than any other institution in the history of Aboriginal welfare. Like Perkins, Briscoe owed the life he subsequently led to those who provided such opportunities. Rather than acting from any fear of collaborators with the enemy, the long-term motives of the Territory authorities were to fulfil the pre-war promise of a 'new deal' for Aborigines. This was especially true of the wartime head of Native Affairs, E. W. Pearson Chinnery who organized their evacuation in 1942. Chinnery was not only a distinguished public servant in Australia and New Guinea but also an anthropologist of considerable ability.[54] In collaboration with Territory missions, he designed a program to integrate half-caste children into the mainstream school system and to assist older youth move to areas with greater job prospects by providing them with hostel accommodation. After the war, the plan became reality. In his report for 1946, the then acting Director of Native Affairs, V. G. Carrington, described the Territory's introduction of non-segregated schooling:

> The experiment conducted by the Aborigines Inland Mission in Darwin and the Church of England Board of Missions in Alice Springs, whereby children are cared for in the institution but receive their education at the public school along with European children and half-caste children not under the control of the Branch, will be watched with interest. This innovation eliminates the institution school and is calculated to inculcate confidence in the children by their association with European children.[55]

The result was that by mid-1946 no less than 35 per cent of the Territory's enrolments in public schools were of half-caste children (139 out of a total enrolment of 399). In the territory's Catholic schools, 41 per cent of total enrolments were half-castes (89 out of 217 enrolments).[56] The same report also commended proposals for more hostels to enhance the job prospects of Aboriginal youth:

> It has become increasingly evident that if the half-caste Missions at Melville Island, Croker Island and Groote Eylandt cannot absorb in employment all adolescents after they have completed their education, they will have to seek employment on the mainland, particularly in town centres such as Darwin.

[53] Moriarty, *Saltwater Fella*, p 64

[54] David Lawrence, 'The Early Ethnographic Writings of E.W. Pearson Chinnery: Government anthropologist of New Guinea', Frederick Watson Fellowship Paper, National Archives of Australia, Canberra, March 2006

[55] *Report on the Administration of the Northern Territory for Year 1945-46*, p 31

[56] *Report on the Administration of the Northern Territory for Year 1945-46*, p 34

> This fact calls for the establishment of hostels to house these inmates during their period of employment in town centres. The Methodist Mission authorities are alive to the question of establishing hostels for their inmates and overtures have already been made in this direction.[57]

In short, although it initially caused some delays in Aboriginal reform, the war changed everything. Aborigines moved into the Army and from there into the peacetime civilian labour force. The old pastoral system of payment by rations was replaced by payment of wages, sometimes at the same rate as white counterparts. The government protection system lost its rationale and authority, as did tribal elders. The last of the nomads came in from the bush. Those Aboriginal children who performed well at school increasingly took up the opportunities offered by the Territory's rapid postwar growth and modernization. It was a time of dramatic reform in Aboriginal affairs.

THE INCIDENCE OF REMOVALS IN THE POST-WAR PERIOD

> While overt biological engineering was brought to an official end in 1939, social engineering continued for another thirty years. Large numbers of children were removed from their mothers, and a significant number of women of mixed descent more or less voluntarily committed their children to Homes as they failed to cope in a hostile social and economic environment ...
>
> — Tony Austin, academic historian, 1993[58]

> After the War, the forcible removal of Indigenous children recommenced. Patrol officers were required to report on the presence of children of mixed descent living in Aboriginal communities and make arrangements for their removal to settlements and mission homes ... At the beginning of the 1950s NT missions cared for 360 children (Cummings 1990 page 79) which was most if not all of the mixed descent children in the Territory (Armitage 1995 page 59).
>
> — Human Rights Commission, *Bringing Them Home* [59]

Despite the pace of postwar economic development and cultural change, the authors of the *Bringing Them Home* report still tried to fit the history of the Stolen Generations in the Northern Territory into the framework it used for pre-war policy in the southern states. The second statement above is an example of how the report had to distort the facts to preserve the thesis. It is also an illustration of the irresponsibility of the Commission's practice of relying upon second-

[57] *Report on the Administration of the Northern Territory for Year 1945-46*, p 31
[58] Austin, *I Can Picture the Old Home So Clearly*, p 213
[59] *Bringing Them Home*, pp 141–2

ary sources written by political activists and academic historians, like Tony Austin above, rather than doing its own research.

By 'settlements and mission homes' and 'NT missions', the Human Rights Commission meant the four approved and funded by the government: Retta Dixon, Garden Point, Croker Island and St Mary's Hostel. While its reference to Barbara Cummings's work [60] was accurate enough — she counted 360 part-Aboriginal children on missions, whereas the actual figure in 1952 was 353 — the Commission's claim that this amounted to most of the Territory's part-Aboriginal children was quite false. The reference to 'Armitage' was to a Canadian book comparing assimilation policies in Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Its author, Andrew Armitage, a professor of social work at the University of Victoria, Canada, wrote: 'The number of children in these homes at any one time was around 400, and this represented all the known half-caste children in the Territory.'[61] As source for this claim, the book simply cited 'Northern Territory Administration annual reports'. [62] But anyone who looks them up will find Armitage either failed to consult their population tables or cannot count.

The most accurate figures for this period are those available for 1954 when the Territory government undertook one of its irregular population censuses. In that year's census, the Territory's half-caste population was recorded as 1,955.[63] The census provided no separate figure for half-caste children. However, among the full-blood population of mission residents that year, the ratio of adults to children was 56.4 per cent to 43.6 per cent.[64] If the same ratio held for half-caste children, then there was a total of 852 half-caste children in the territory at the time, of whom only 353 were in mission homes. In other words, almost 60 per cent of half-caste children were *not* in mission homes.

The post-war mix of Territory institutions, and the distribution of children within them, is summarized in Table 10.2, which provides a snapshot of the system that existed in 1952. The lists of children at these institutions, it should be emphasized, cannot be taken as any indication of the extent of the Stolen Generations. As sections of this chapter below demonstrate, most of the half-caste children were

[60] Cummings, *Take This Child*, p 79

[61] Andrew Armitage, *Comparing the Policy of Aboriginal Assimilation: Australia, Canada and New Zealand*, UBC Press, Vancouver, 1995, p 59

[62] Armitage, *Comparing the Policy of Aboriginal Assimilation*, p 61

[63] The Northern Territory, *Report for the Period 1st July 1953 to 30th June 1955*, Table 1, p 45

[64] The Northern Territory, *Report for the Period 1st July 1953 to 30th June 1955*, Table 4, p 91, which shows full-blood residents on missions in 1954–55 as: adults 2283; children 1766.

TABLE 10.2: ABORIGINAL CHILDREN AT GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS AND RELIGIOUS MISSIONS IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY, 1952

Name and location	*Founding organization*	*Number of half-caste children*	*Number of full-blood children*
Retta Dixon Home, Darwin	Aborigines Inland Mission	90	
Garden Point Mission, Melville Island	Sacred Heart Missions, Roman Catholic Church	104	
Croker Island Mission, Arnhem Land	Methodist Overseas Missions	87	
St Mary's Hostel, Alice Springs	Australian Board of Missions, Church of England	72	
Bathurst Island, Timor Sea	Roman Catholic Missions		225
Port Keats Mission, Joseph Bonaparte Gulf	Roman Catholic Missions		107
Little Flower Mission, Artlunga, Central Australia	Roman Catholic Missions		104
Oenpelli Mission, Arnhem Land	Church Missionary Society, Church of England		102
Roper River Mission, Gulf of Capentaria	Church Missionary Society, Church of England		149
Groote Eylandt, Gulf of Carpentaria	Church Missionary Society, Church of England		139

Umbakumba, Groote Eylandt	F. H. Gray, non-denominational	97
Millingimbi Mission, Crocodile Islands, Arnhem Land	Methodist Overseas Missions	179
Goulburn Island Mission, Arnhem Land	Methodist Overseas Missions	90
Yirrkala Mission, Arnhem Land	Methodist Overseas Missions	162
Elcho Island, Arnhem Land	Methodist Overseas Missions	176
Finke River Mission, Hermannsburg, Central Australia	Lutheran Church	163

Source: The Northern Territory, *Report for the Period 1st July 1949 to 30th June 1953*, pp 64–5.

TABLE 10.3: HALF-CASTE ABORIGINAL CHILDREN ADMITTED TO MISSIONS, NORTHERN TERRITORY, 1946–1951

Name of institution	*Number of girls*	*Number of boys*
Retta Dixon Home, Darwin	11	7
Garden Point Mission, Melville Island	11	12
Croker Island Mission, Arnhem Land	27	20
St Mary's Hostel, Alice Springs	16	6
Total	65	45

Source: Administrator, Northern Territory, to Secretary, Department of Territories, 28 February 1952, cited by O'Loughlin J, Federal Court of Australia, Northern Territory District Registry, *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth,* 20 August 2000, para 226.

either at these institutions with their parents' approval to get an education or else were genuine welfare cases such as orphans, neglected and destitute children. The full-blood children on missions had not been removed from their parents. They had moved into mission communities *with* their parents. The government policy of protection for full-blood people, as noted earlier, meant their children had to remain with them.

At the 1954 census, the Territory's full-blood population totalled 16,469, of whom 4049 adults and children were residents or regular visitors to missions.[65] This meant that only 24 per cent of full-blood Aborigines were connected to these institutions.

It also meant the total Aboriginal population (full-blood and half-caste) of the Territory in 1954 was 18,424, of whom 8032 were children. Hence the Aboriginal children (full-blood and half-caste) on government and religious missions at the time only accounted for 26 per cent of Aboriginal children in the Territory. Or, in other words, 74 per cent of Aboriginal children in the Territory were not under the control of either kind of institution. This was not a picture of the universal forced removal portrayed by *Bringing Them Home*.

As well as the totals recorded here, it is also important to consider the *rate* of removals. How many of the Territory's half-caste children in this period were being removed each year? Although this would seem to be an obvious question to ask for anyone writing about the *process* of removal, one can look without success through the major publications to find an answer. Neither *Between Two Worlds* nor *Bringing Them Home* sought to investigate it, or, if they did, they declined to publish the results.

The results for the immediate post-war period are presented in Table 10.3. In February 1952, the Territory Administrator reported to the Secretary of the Department of Territories in Canberra providing information about the number of half-caste children removed under his jurisdiction, their ages and the institutions to which they were admitted. In the six years from 1946 to 1951, he recorded a total of 110 removals, an average of just eighteen per year.

Citing this report and the figures in Table 10.3 in his August 2000 judgement in the case of *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, Justice Maurice O'Loughlin acknowledged they were bare statistics. They did not disclose the reasons for the placements, nor say how many were removed against the wishes of the family, nor indicate how many were neglected or in need of medical care and attention. Nonetheless, he found them telling:

[65] The Northern Territory, *Report for the period 1st July 1953 to 30th June 1955*, Table 4, p 91

> Even though one forced removal would be regarded today as one too many, the numbers in the Administrator's report, if accurate, do not support an argument that there was a large scale policy of forced removals occurring in this period.[66]

THE EVIDENCE ABOUT THE RETTA DIXON HOME

The Northern Territory's best-known institution for half-castes in the post-war period was a new hostel on its Bagot Reserve at Darwin. Housed in a building reclaimed from the Army occupation, the territory government commissioned the Aborigines Inland Mission to operate it.[67] Named the Retta Dixon Home after the founder of the Aborigines Inland Mission, it continued in its role until destroyed by Cyclone Tracey in 1974, and it finally closed down in 1980. Although the Bagot Reserve was otherwise for full-blood Aborigines, the home accommodated mostly half-caste people. Today, it has joined the list of insidious institutions named by the Human Rights Commission as places for the incarceration of the Stolen Generations. One section of the chapter on the Northern Territory in *Bringing them Home* is devoted to Retta Dixon, where, among numerous misrepresentations, this unsourced passage appears:

> Accommodation was in dormitories. Breast-feeding mothers were allowed to stay with their babies for a few months but once weaned the infants were taken from them and placed in the nursery. Mothers could only see their children during the day. At night the infants were in the charge of the mission staff.[68]

It is true some children were housed in dormitories, but mothers with children were provided with cottages where they lived together. The 'nursery' was for children aged one to four years but most, in fact, were 4-year-olds. Very few babies were ever accommodated there. In any case, if the Human Rights Commission was right and mothers could see their babies throughout the day, they could hardly be regarded as stolen. Yet again, this passage could not have been written by anyone familiar with the primary source documents about this institution. Had its authors bothered to check the Northern Ter-

[66] O'Loughlin J, *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth,* 11 August 2000, para 226

[67] The degree of government control of the Retta Dixon Home was an issue that came before the court in *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth.* In his judgement of August 2000, Justice Maurice O'Loughlin agreed that the territory's Director of Native Affairs had ultimate authority: 'the administration had a direct involvement in the control of the children even though they were residing in a Home' (para 374).

[68] *Bringing Them Home*, p 142

ritory archives, they would have found its functions were quite different.

Unlike the pre-war Half-Caste Home, Retta Dixon was not an institution exclusively for children. At any one time, from one-fifth to one-quarter of its residents were either young working women or parents, most of them mothers of the children housed there. Retta Dixon began life in the post-war period as a hostel for half-caste women and girls employed in the town of Darwin. It also took in the half-caste children of unmarried mothers, and offered employment and accommodation to some of the children's mothers. It provided temporary accommodation for the children of parents attending the Bagot Reserve medical clinic or admitted to hospital. Some came from remote communities to go to school in Darwin, with not only their parents' approval but often with their board paid by parents too. Some of the home's children were orphans, others were offspring of parents who were either incapable or unwilling to care for them, such as the chronically ill, the disabled and inmates of Darwin's prison. In short, it was a hostel for both mothers and children, almost all half-caste and many long-assimilated into white society, who were in need of welfare assistance, education or hospital care. It had nothing to do with ending Aboriginality, changing Aboriginal culture, or any of the other fanciful explanations that historians have given about the objectives of such institutions.

Let me demonstrate this with an analysis of its records from the 1950s. These records, which include lists of inmates, are held by the Darwin office of the National Archives of Australia. Their access is restricted to people of Aboriginal descent who are engaged in genealogical research. However, one genealogist, P. J. Mackett, has posted on the Internet a series of records from the years 1952 to 1957,[69] on which the following discussion is based.

Numbers: Retta Dixon was the sole post-war government institution for half-castes in the Northern Territory. The Aborigines Inland Mission operated it on a daily basis but it reported to and worked closely with the Director of Native Affairs. As Table 10.2 shows, the government devolved all other care for children to the Territory's religious missions. Since Retta Dixon only ever housed up to 120 people (adults and children) it can hardly have ever been intended for, or

[69] Australian Aboriginal Genealogy Resources (P. J. Mackett, 2005) Northern Territory, National Archives of Australia, Darwin Office, Aborigines Inland Mission, Bagot, Retta Dixon Home: http://mc2.vicnet.net.au/home/pmackett/RettaDixon1.html; Aborigines Inland Mission, Retta Dixon Home, Policy and Development: http://mc2.vicnet.net.au/home/pmackett/RettaDixon2.html

acted as, a site for the assimilation of all the Territory's half-castes. The home's monthly reports to government showed that in December 1952, for instance, it housed 96 children and twelve women. These women, however, were the mothers of 34 of the children. In other words, about one-third of the children lived at the home with at least one of their own parents. One woman was housed there with her eight children, another with her seven children and two others with five children each.[70]

Age and Sex of Children: One of the readily available documents records the age and sex of each child at the home in January 1956. It showed that 80 per cent of children were of school age, between five and fifteen years. This is not surprising given that one of the reasons for the home's existence was to provide board for children who came to Darwin to go to the local public school. Table 10.4 shows the age and sex breakdown. As in the pre-war period, the majority of children were girls.

How many of them were babies? In 1956 there were none. Of the children in Table 10.4 who were four years and less, one girl was two years, one boy was two years and another boy was aged three. The rest of the eleven children in the age category one to four years were all four years old. In fact, in all the lists of residents available from 1952 to 1957, only two women were recorded being admitted with a baby, one in 1952, the other in 1953. This pattern was consistent with the records for the pre-war period when the records for the late 1930s showed only two babies recorded living in the Half-Caste Home, both with their mothers.[71]

Welfare and Employment: The mothers at Retta Dixon were typical female welfare clientele of any colour: widows, deserted wives, wives of prisoners, and unmarried mothers. The need to care for children inhibited their ability to gain a job and thus provide for themselves. Some had part-time jobs in the town, others were given jobs at the home itself. In 1957, one mother boarding at the home with her three daughters and one son worked full-time in the kitchen. Another boarding at the home with her two sons worked in the laundry. Some other mothers worked and lived on employers' premises in Darwin five days a week while their children boarded at Retta Dixon. On weekends, these mothers came to the home and stayed there with their children.[72]

[70] Monthly Return, Aborigines Inland Mission Home, Bagot Road, Darwin, 31 December 1952

[71] *Report of the Administration of the Northern Territory for Year 1937–38*, p 25

[72] Correspondence from Retta Dixon Home to Director of Native Welfare, 23 May 1957

TABLE 10.4: AGE OF CHILDREN AT RETTA DIXON HOME, DARWIN, 1956

Age	*Girls*	*Boys*
1–4 years	4	7
5–7 years	13	6
8–11 years	20	12
12–15 years	13	6
16 years and over	3	4
Total	53	35

Source: Retta Dixon Home, list of Aboriginal people at the Home on 20 January 1956, in Australian Aboriginal Genealogy Resources (P. J. Mackett, 2006) Northern Territory, National Archives of Australia, Darwin Office, Aborigines Inland Mission, Bagot, Retta Dixon Home, Policy and Development: http://mc2.vicnet.net.au/home/pmackett/RettaDixon2.html.

As well as mothers, Retta Dixon housed a number of its own former child residents, older girls who had gained jobs in Darwin. They remained at Retta Dixon until they either found accommodation themselves or were housed by employers, or until they married. In 1957, four girls aged fifteen and sixteen years were in this position, housed at Retta Dixon but employed outside. [73]

Once children were old enough, the home actively sought to place them into jobs. Most of the boys went on to work as stockmen on cattle stations, like most other Aboriginal boys at the time. Despite the insistence of Peter Read and the Human Rights Commission that policy aimed at separating them from their people, no one can truthfully say that objective was pursued at Retta Dixon. In 1952, the home recorded the following employment outcomes for boys (names in original have been converted to initials):

> Review Report, Retta Dixon Home, Aborigines Inland Mission, 1952: Employment Placement
> C. H., 16 years, returned to his parents to assist in pastoral work
> J. R., 13 years, returned to his mother, Mountain Valley Station (Mainoru district)
> C. S., 15 years, working on Mountain Valley Station
> C. H., 15 years, working on Douglas Station, Daly River
> P. P. Q, 17 years, working on Mr Knowles' buffalo shooting property
> P. P. Q. returned to the Home on November 24th when work closed down for the Wet Season. He has been offered work with Mr Knowles

[73] Correspondence from Retta Dixon Home to Director of Native Welfare, 23 May 1957

> again next year. He was paid off at the Home with a cheque for 60 pounds; this has been paid into his Savings Bank Account. Peter now has 75 pounds 10 shillings in his Bank.[74]

Committals Versus Voluntary Residents: Under the Aboriginals Ordinance in the post-war period, the Director of Native Affairs had the authority to commit half-caste children to the home on welfare grounds. The State Children's Council could also commit children for similar reasons. The available records do not distinguish children on these grounds except in 1957 when it discussed the cases of thirteen residents who had been committed and 30 residents who had not been committed.[75] This only accounts for about half the residents at the time and thus provides only a rough guide to their legal status. Nonetheless it shows that, at the very least, one-third of the residents were not committals, that is, they were voluntary admissions. The most common in this category were children whose parents requested the home to admit them, and paid for their board. In the home's records, the amount paid each week was listed against the name of the parent.[76] Several of those who could afford it also paid for their children to come home for school holidays. For the school vacation that began in December 1952, children were recorded going home to their parents at Birdum, Mountain Valley and Katherine.[77]

Most of the children whose mothers lived at the home were also there at their parent's request, although in 1953 one mother and her six children had all been committed to the home by the Native Affairs department after their part-Aboriginal father was sentenced to prison.[78] Some parents and grandparents paid for their children's upkeep voluntarily, while others had to be coerced into it by the department. Where the father was a known white man, the Native Affairs branch normally pursued him and obliged him to pay maintenance of about 10 shillings per week per child.[79]

Aboriginal Staff: The records from Retta Dixon also disprove another canard from the Stolen Generations myth, that the intention of gov-

[74] Review Report, Retta Dixon Home, Aborigines Inland Mission, 1952: Employment Placement

[75] Correspondence from Retta Dixon Home to Director of Native Welfare, 23 May 1957

[76] Correspondence from Retta Dixon Home to Director of Native Welfare, 23 May1957

[77] Monthly Return, Aborigines Inland Mission Home, Bagot Road, Darwin, 31 December1952

[78] Letter to District Superintendent, Native Affairs Branch from J. R. Ryan, Patrol Officer, about the Retta Dixon Home, 15 August 1953

[79] J. R. Ryan, Patrol Officer, memo about Half-Castes not Committed to Institutions, 11 August 1953

ernments was to bring up Aboriginal children as whites to live in a white society by denying them contact with other Aboriginal people. For, apart from the white superintendent Amelia Shankelton, the rest of Retta Dixon's staff were Aborigines. In 1951, Shankelton employed three missionary-trained Aboriginal women as teachers and supervisors, all from the Northern Territory, as well as domestic staff composed of Aboriginal women. In 1953, her teacher/supervisors had grown to four, listed as follows:

> Miss Fogarty, about 21 years old, has been on the staff for six months and works in the nursery. She is a half-caste.
>
> Miss R. Lacey is about 25 years old and has worked as a missionary at Phillip Creek and Delissaville Native Settlements, and has been on the present staff for three years. She is a full-blood aborigine. She assists in the nursery.
>
> Mrs C. Knox is a half-caste about 55 years of age. She has been at Bagot Road for three years and has had five years of mission experiences in New South Wales. She is in charge of the infant-school girls and helps with the general domestic work of the Home.
>
> Miss C. South, a half-caste, is about 30. She has been on the staff since February 1948. Her duties consist of looking after a group of senior girls.[80]

And, as noted earlier, the mothers employed in the kitchen and laundry were all part-Aboriginal women too.

Indeed, because Retta Dixon was located within the Bagot Reserve, which by this time was populated largely by full-blood people, it gave the lie to Peter Read's claim that the aim of the white authorities was to cut the intergenerational bonds between Aboriginal children and Aboriginal communities. Framing her own experiences within Read's thesis, one former Retta Dixon inmate, Barbara Cummings, wrote:

> Despite our familiarity with the Aboriginal population on the reserve, the smaller children in particular had been inculcated with a deep fear of the 'blackfella'. This fear had been instilled by the situation in which we lived; by the ramifications of the mission's adoption of the assimilation policy; and by the almost paranoid desire of the government authorities to keep part-Aborigines separate.[81]

This is hard to believe. If these really had been the authorities' aims, they had a strange way of going about it. Retta Dixon was actually set in the middle of the Bagot Reserve, between the hospital and village

[80] Letter to District Superintendent, Native Affairs Branch from J. R. Ryan, Patrol Officer, about Retta Dixon Home, 15 August 1953
[81] Cummings, *Take This Child*, p 84

that housed the full-blood people, so children in the home grew up literally surrounded by Aborigines. They probably had more contact with other Aborigines in a single day than a nomadic child in the outback would have had in a month.

SISTER EILEEN HEATH AND ST MARY'S HOSTEL

Another of the institutions partly supported by the Territory government in the post-war period was St Mary's Hostel at Alice Springs. Founded by the Church of England in 1946, it has been commonly treated by historians as a replacement for the Bungalow, the pre-war welfare home for half-caste children, which never reopened after being requisitioned by the Army. St Mary's Hostel is often listed as one of the institutions that housed the Stolen Generations.

As its name said, it was a hostel. Its initiator, Father Kenneth Leslie of the Anglican parish of Alice Springs, wanted to set up accommodation so that children of mixed descent living on cattle stations in the region could attend school in town and return home during school holidays. He expected either their parents or the owners of their stations to pay towards their board. Leslie appointed Sister Eileen Heath, an Anglican deaconess from Western Australia, as the first superintendent. After discussion with the Territory's Director of Native Affairs about government financial support, Leslie and Heath drew up the hostel's mission statement:

> To provide a home for half-caste children attending school.
> To train girls from school age in domestic science and dress making.
> To train boys of school leaving age in gardening, poultry farming etc.
> To provide a home for any boys working in town as apprentices.
> To form a community welfare and recreational centre for all half-caste people in and around the district.[82]

Sister Eileen Heath came to Alice Springs after nine years as the sole Anglican missionary at the Moore Rive Settlement in Western Australia. When she lived in that settlement with the children of the compound, she despaired at their awful diet, poor health and sporadic education. She almost ended her career in the church by objecting to the conditions. In 1944, after a group of former juvenile offenders broke in to the younger girls' dormitory and committed a series of sexual assaults, she protested to church authorities about the 'very grave injustice' being done to its inmates. She criticized the administrators of Moore River and called for a complete overhaul of its management. Her comments were subsequently read aloud to the Anglican Synod and picked up by the Perth press. In the ensuing public

[82] Roberts, *Sister Eileen*, p 133

scandal, the Commissioner of Native Affairs appointed an enquiry headed by one of his own officers, who exonerated the administration and found Sister Eileen the chief culprit:

> We have completely changed the staff on a number of occasions but have not been able to satisfy [Sister Eileen] and it is now evident to me that she herself is mostly the offender against the happiness of the settlement.[83]

Although she had strong support from deans of the church, the Anglican Archbishop of Western Australia, Henry Le Fanu, decided her public notoriety, coupled with the antagonism towards her from Commissioner F. I. Bray and Labor government Minister Aubrey Coverley, made her position intolerable. He removed her from Moore River. Her stand, however, had won enough admiration from other clergy to enable her to attach some very positive references to her application for the job at Alice Springs.[84]

At the end of the war, using a grant from English parishioners, the Church of England bought the former Lady Gowrie Rest Home, a 2-year-old rest and recreation centre built for servicewomen, four miles south of Alice Springs at Mount Blatherskite. It was a large, high-quality building with twelve rooms, deep verandas, surrounded by lawns, gardens, tennis court and vegetable garden on an 800-acre site. Sister Eileen renamed it St Mary's Hostel. Once advertised, it quickly attracted boarders. The first two boys in 1946, aged five and seven years, came from Newcastle Waters cattle station, 400 miles away, accompanied on the bus by their father. According to Sister Eileen's biographer, Annette Roberts, 'their "full-blood" father was determined his sons should have a similar education to that of his boss's boy who boarded at St John's Hostel in town'.[85]

Each day, Sister Eileen piled the children into the hostel's converted ute and drove them to Hartley Street School in the town. After the word spread, her first year's intake of eighteen students expanded in 1947 to 29. That year Sister Eileen agreed to take another 25 children from the wartime evacuees to Mulgoa. She organized construction of extra accommodation and a chapel from ex-Army prefabricated buildings. She housed the junior girls in the original building, senior girls and junior boys in separate dormitories, and senior boys in a separate cottage. From then on, her total enrolment at any one time ranged between 50 and 60 students.[86]

In 1949, after she had accompanied the remainder of the Mulgoa children on the train from Sydney to Alice Springs, she abandoned

[83] Roberts, *Sister Eileen*, p 108
[84] Roberts, *Sister Eileen*, pp 102–12, 121–5
[85] Roberts, *Sister Eileen*, p 136
[86] Roberts, *Sister Eileen*, pp 137–43, 209

any plan to provide recreation for half-caste adults. She decided to focus primarily on school-age half-caste children, most of them fee-paying boarders. Most parents paid the fees by diverting to the hostel their regular Child Endowment payment, introduced in 1941 by the Commonwealth government and given to all parents with a child under sixteen years of age.[87] In 1951 Sister Eileen became a member of the State Children's Council, a body responsible for child welfare matters, especially children committed by courts into the care of the council for delinquency or neglect. St Mary's subsequently permitted an additional intake of some children committed this way.[88]

By the early-1950s, the hostel was widely regarded as a model of its kind. It attracted visits from two governors-general, administrators of the Territory, several Commonwealth government ministers, the Chief Girl Guide and the Director of the Red Cross. It gained favourable press and radio coverage from the Canberra press corps, *Woman's Day* magazine, the Australian Broadcasting Commission and even *The Times* of London. St Mary's became known as one of the Territory's showpiece attractions. It drew busloads of tourists. 'I didn't mind visitors coming,' said Eileen, 'because it was good for the children to show their place off and they loved doing that, they loved showing around.'[89]

By 1956, after ten years as superintendent, she left the hostel. A total of 153 children had passed through her doors. Most, as noted above, were fee-paying boarders. Forty-one of them were children committed into care by the government. Eight had come with their mothers from Mulgoa. Others, whose parents could not afford the fees, but who had been recommended to the hostel by government patrol officers, had their board paid by the department.[90]

In other words, the hostel's history did not match the profile ascribed to institutions for the Stolen Generations. Apart from its minority of welfare cases, the children at St Mary's were not permanent boarders but went home for the school holidays. It was not a closed institution but open to the local community, with its children attending school in town every weekday. It was never a home for babies, infants or pre-schoolers, let alone a place where children could be sent to lose their Aboriginality. Indeed, Sister Eileen made no attempt to prevent children from the same language group from conversing together. 'A lot of kids who came there still knew their language,' quoted Annette Roberts from one of her interviews with

[87] Roberts, *Sister Eileen*, pp 147–8
[88] O'Loughlin J., *Cubillo and Gunner versus Commonwealth*, 11 August 2000, paras 111–2
[89] Roberts, *Sister Eileen*, pp 173–5
[90] Roberts, *Sister Eileen*, p 179

former boarders, 'and unlike their cousins at Moore River were free to use it.'[91] Parents were welcome to visit, and when any of them did it was 'a big occasion'. Some parents stayed overnight or for a few days.[92] Nor were they isolated from the Aboriginal population of the district, either in town or out at Mount Blatherskite. The hostel was situated on the bank of the Sandover River, along which there was 'a passing multitude of Aboriginal people'. The children were protected but not denied daily intercourse with other Aborigines.[93]

For 30 years after Sister Eileen's departure, she retained her reputation with her former charges. For the rest of their lives, most of them looked back on her with affection. One of her strongest supporters was the film actress Rosalie Kunoth-Monks, who grew up on Utopia Station, north-east of Alice Springs, and became a boarder at St Mary's in 1950. When interviewed by Annette Roberts in 1996, Kunoth-Monks was still grateful for the opportunity to go to school:

> St Mary's was the in thing. I mean, it gave hope to people such as my father and mother who didn't have a house in town and who didn't have access to putting their children through school out here ... My father always maintained Sister Eileen was a saint. [94]

Unfortunately, Sister Eileen's successors were not in the same league. Those who replaced her after 1956 allowed the management of the hostel to decline. By the early 1960s, Commonwealth health inspectors were making serious complaints. They described the boys' toilets and showers as 'disgraceful', 'insanitary' and 'unhygienic'. Collapsed drains and broken pipes testified to 'a general air of disinterest and neglect'. The staff largely ignored the recommendations the inspectors made for improvements.[95]

St Mary's also recruited one staff member who turned out to be a homosexual pederast. In 1964, an Anglican missionary at the hostel, Kevin Constable, was charged in Alice Springs Magistrate's Court with sexual abuse of boys for handling their penises while pretending to give them health care. Boys also accused him of punishing offences such as bedwetting by flogging them on their bare buttocks. Constable denied the sexual abuse charges and was acquitted by the magi-

[91] Roberts, *Sister Eileen*, p 179
[92] Roberts, *Sister Eileen*, pp 143, 180
[93] Douglas Meagher, 'Not Guilty', *Quadrant*, November 2000, p 31
[94] Interview with author Annette Roberts, *Sister Eileen*, p 145. In 1953, while at St Mary's, 16-year-old Rosalie Kunoth was cast as the female lead of the Charles Chauvel film *Jedda*. In the film, her name was given as Ngarla Kunoth.
[95] O'Loughlin J, *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, 11 August 2000, paras 1053–8

strate. The superintendent of the hostel, Archdeacon A. H. Bott, retained him on the staff. In a later review of these incidents, however, Justice Maurice O'Loughlin described them as 'grossly improper'.[96]

Nonetheless, over the history of the hostel, the majority of its children appeared to have found their time there a positive one. Until the 1990s, St Mary's student reunions were well-attended and happy affairs. Good relationships continued between many former children and staff.[97] Between 1994 and 1997, however, all that changed. The reputation of St Mary's suddenly became an issue of national significance. One of its former boarders, Peter Gunner, who was admitted to the hostel in 1956, became party to a case that eventually went before the Federal Court in Darwin. Gunner alleged that he was one of the Stolen Generations and that St Mary's had been the site of his 'wrongful imprisonment and deprivation of liberty'.

THE INTENTIONS OF THE AUTHORITIES IN THE POST-WAR PERIOD

In 1990, Barbara Cummings published her book about policies for half-caste children in the Northern Territory. Entitled *Take This Child: From Kahlin Compound to Retta Dixon Home*, the book was a history of this issue from the early twentieth century onwards. Cummings had been born at the Retta Dixon Home and grew up there while her mother and siblings were residents. As an adult she moved to Adelaide and took up a career as a social worker. *Take This Child* was inspired by the work of Peter Read and framed within his thesis about the Stolen Generations. The author selected her facts and interpreted her findings largely within Read's assumptions. The Human Rights Commission's national inquiry into Aboriginal child removal subsequently chose her to be a member of its Indigenous Advisory Council.[98]

In 1994, Cummings and others convened a conference in Darwin and invited all those who had been children in the Territory's half-caste homes. Called 'Going Home', it attracted more than 600 people who by this time had been persuaded that they were members of the Stolen Generations too. Some speakers said their wrongful removal from their parents amounted to 'cultural genocide'. As I noted in Chapter One, Melbourne barrister Ron Merkel, soon to be appointed by the Labor government a Federal Court judge, told the audience of the reparations Germany had paid the Jews after the

[96] O'Loughlin J, *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, 11 August 2000, paras 864, 892–908

[97] Meagher, 'Not Guilty', p 32

[98] *Bringing Them Home*, p 671

Second World War. All the Territory's 'stolen' children deserved compensation too. He recommended litigation against the Commonwealth government. The Darwin conference circulated a document of instructions to a solicitor, inviting signatures. Subsequently, committees were formed to pursue the litigation and a 'Stolen Generations' legal unit created. At Alice Springs, the Central Land Council opened an exercise book at its offices, inviting all who wanted compensation to sign.[99] All up, lawyers in Darwin filed 550 claims by people claiming to be members of the Stolen Generations against the Commonwealth government for common law damages.

Out of this came one of the two major test cases of the Stolen Generations issue. Lorna Cubillo and Peter Gunner, both part-Aboriginal people, sued the Commonwealth government for wrongful imprisonment and negligence in its duty of care. In 1947 Cubillo and fifteen other children were taken from the Phillip Creek Native Settlement by Amelia Shankelton, superintendent of the Retta Dixon Home, and sent to Darwin in a truck driven by Les Penhall, a cadet patrol officer with the Territory's Native Affairs Branch. In 1956 Gunner was taken from Utopia Station by Harry Kitching, a patrol officer with the Native Affairs Branch. Kitching drove Gunner to Alice Springs and placed him in St Mary's Hostel.

The legal action by Cubillo and Gunner made a number of claims but the central issue was the intention of the Director of the Native Affairs Branch. The applicants acknowledged that, during the 1940s and 1950s, the Director had the legal authority to remove half-caste children as he saw fit, irrespective of their parents' wishes. The major question was whether in doing so he had used his power properly. Had he acted in the best interests of the children or was he pursuing what the applicants called 'a general policy of removal and detention' based on the children's race, whether that was in their interests or not?

In 1951, Charles Duguid, the humanitarian and surgeon who had been instrumental in establishing the Ernabella Mission in the Musgrave Ranges of South Australia, was reported in the press criticizing the federal government for separating part-Aboriginal children from their mothers. The next day the Northern Territory's Director of Native Affairs, Frank Moy, wrote a letter to the Administrator of the Territory, F. J. S. Wise. Moy's letter, which became the basis of a report to Canberra and a press release to the news media by the Administrator, described both the existing policy and the role of patrol officers. He wrote:

[99] Meagher, 'Not Guilty', pp 33–4

> Patrol Officers, under my direction, are requested from time to time to endeavour to remove certain part-aboriginal children from their native environment on cattle stations and other places, and these officers prepare the mothers of these children for the eventual separation. It is impressed upon them the advantages to be gained by the children and the disadvantages of allowing them to remain in the camp. The matter is discussed with the tribal husbands. If, at the first visit, the parents are loth [*sic*] to part with the child the matter is left until the next visit when another attempt is made and the process of 'educating' the parents is continued. Eventually (and a period of two years may elapse between the first attempt and final success) the child is willingly handed to the custody of the Patrol Officer.
>
> Under these circumstances there is no distress on the part of either party. In fact it strengthens the confidence of the native peoples in the work of the patrol officer. There have been instances of mothers giving their part-aboriginal children into the care of Native Affairs Branch officials without any prompting and, only this year, one aboriginal mother brought her two part-aboriginal children to Darwin and asked that they be admitted to one of the Institutions.
>
> All mothers are given the opportunity of accompanying their children to Darwin or Alice Springs and this offer is sometimes accepted. In this way they get some insight into the conditions and surroundings of the future life of their offspring, and they invariably return to their country satisfied.[100]

In reproducing this statement in his judgement in *Cubillo and Gunner v. the Commonwealth*, Justice Maurice O'Loughlin wondered whether Moy's statement might have been simply designed to put a favourable gloss on what the counsel for the applicants called 'a general policy of removal and detention' of part-Aboriginal children. 'Were these the words of a senior public servant who had the best interests of the part Aboriginal children at heart,' O'Loughlin conjectured, 'or were they nothing more than pious hypocrisy?' Moy was dead and could not be cross-examined to test this, but O'Loughlin explored the issue at considerable length.

He found that, before 1957, Section 6 of the Territory's Aboriginals Ordinance gave ultimate authority about child removals to the Director of Native Affairs. In practice, the policy did call for a painstaking attempt to explain to the child's mother the advantages to be gained from the child's removal but, in law, the Director had the authority to act whether the mother agreed or not. In 1957, however, the old Aboriginals Ordinance was replaced by a new Welfare Ordinance, which abolished the Director's legal right to remove

[100] F. S. Moy, Director of Native Affairs, to F. J. S. Wise, Administrator, Northern Territory, 24 October 1951, in *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, judgement by O'Loughlin J, 11 August 2000, para 220

children on his own judgement. Without a mothers' consent, he now had to rely upon a court to either declare a child a ward or commit the child to the care of the State Children's Council. O'Loughlin also observed that there was no doubt that before 1957 that was the policy accepted by the Commonwealth government. He reproduced a letter written in 1951 by the then Minister for Territories, Paul Hasluck:

> For many years past, under successive governments, the policy has been that, where half-caste children are found living in the camps of full-blood natives, they should, if possible, be removed to better care so that they may have a better opportunity for education. The theory behind this policy is that, if the half-caste child remains with the bush tribe, he will grow up to have neither the full satisfaction in life which the tribal native has nor the opportunity to advance to any other status.[101]

However, O'Loughlin decided that the Territory's degree of devotion to this policy could be tested by the number of children it actually removed. He examined the records for 1949 and 1950. They showed that over that period, patrol officers made just 42 removals:

Removed from full-blood aboriginal camp	23
At request of parent	12
Mother unable to maintain due to health	1
Irresponsible mother (disinterested and offering no objections)	1
No definite information available (probably removed from full-blood aboriginal camp).	5 [102]

O'Loughlin concluded that removals on such a small scale failed to confirm the applicants' claim. '[I]f I proceed upon the premise that these figures can be accepted as truthful (and there has been no suggestion that they are false) they do not support suggestions of widespread, indiscriminate removals of part Aboriginal children.'[103]

The judge also rejected two other interpretations made about the policies at the time. He found there was not a general policy to provide domestic and manual labour for the European community of the Territory. He also rejected the notion there was a policy to 'breed out the half-castes' or to protect the 'primacy of the Anglo-Saxon race'. No evidence produced at the trial supported a finding that any

[101] Paul Hasluck to Edna Rockliff, Australian Association for the United Nations, 23 November 1951, in *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, judgement by O'Loughlin J, 11 August 2000, para 229

[102] O'Loughlin J, *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, 11 August 2000, para 224

[103] O'Loughlin J, *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, 11 August 2000, para 225

such purposes existed when either Cubillo or Gunner were removed.[104] Overall Justice O'Loughlin concluded:

> Although there is no evidence identifying the number of part Aboriginal children living in the Territory on any given date one can, nevertheless, feel satisfied that the number of such children far exceeded the ability of the Commonwealth to implement a policy of indiscriminate removal irrespective of the personal circumstances of the child. The number of institutions and their capacity to receive residents was small; the number of patrol officers who had the primary task of identifying whether children should be taken was small. Of the children at the Retta Dixon Home and at St Mary's, the evidence reveals that some were there at the request of their parents and that, in a small number of cases, parents paid fees for their upkeep. The applicants have not, in my opinion, produced the evidence that would substantiate a finding that there was a 'general policy of removal and detention' as alleged in their pleadings.

THE PRACTICES OF WELFARE AND PATROL OFFICERS IN THE 1950S

> Never, however, were children taken from families with a mother and a father. They were *always* from very young and unprotected single mothers, often young girls between 10 and 13 with no family member to properly care for them. On the occasions that I recommended the removal of children from their families, it appeared the alternatives were pretty shocking.
>
> — Colin Macleod, Northern Territory patrol officer, on his experience from 1955 to 1958 (his emphasis)[105]

When the Human Rights Commission's inquiry into the Stolen Generations was underway in the mid-1990s, a number of people who had been employed in Aboriginal child welfare in the past offered themselves as witnesses, but were not called. Among them were people employed as patrol officers and welfare officers in the Northern Territory in the 1950s. However, during the one and only court case against the Commonwealth government on the issue, they *were* called as witnesses and were subject to cross-examination by counsel for the alleged stolen children, Lorna Cubillo and Peter Gunner. The evidence they gave and documents retrieved from the archives under their name largely decided the applicants' case.

The employment of patrol officers in the Northern Territory in the postwar period was based on the existing system in New Guinea. The Territory was divided into six administrative regions. Four patrol officers, all men in their twenties, were given responsibility for them.

[104] O'Loughlin J, *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, 11 August 2000, para 1148

[105] Colin Macleod, *Patrol in the Dreamtime*, Reed Books Australia, Melbourne, 1997, p 171

Before they took up their duties, patrol officers undertook a course in anthropology, at first at the University of Sydney under Professor A. P. Elkin, later at the Australian School of Pacific Administration at Mosman, Sydney. In his judgement in the Cubillo–Gunner case, Justice O'Loughlin discussed the evidence given by patrol officers and other welfare officers of the Native Affairs Branch. He found these witnesses persuasive and their evidence convincing:

> The calibre of the former officers of the Native Affairs Branch and the Welfare Branch who gave evidence in this trial was exceptionally high. Many of them were highly educated and many subsequently achieved high postings in Government in later life. Their achievements are noted later in these reasons. My reason for mentioning this factor is to identify them as people of intelligence and experience who might be expected to have knowledge and awareness of the policies that existed in relation to Aboriginal and part Aboriginal people and the manner in which those policies were implemented. As the summaries of their evidence will reveal, all of them denied the existence of a general or widespread policy of removal of part Aboriginal children and most of them insisted that no child was removed without the consent of the mother of that child.[106]

One of these witnesses was the former patrol officer Creed Lovegrove, who discussed a report he submitted on 25 February 1954. It summarized his activities for the twelve months to 31 December 1953. Under the heading 'Part-Aboriginal Children' Lovegrove wrote:

> On the stations visited by me there were 27 part-aboriginal children (10 male and 17 female) under the age of ten years. Of these — 4 males and 5 females are the children of part aboriginal-full blood combination and are living with their father and mother as a family unit ... Unfortunately none of the remaining children were voluntarily offered for removal to an institution although in each case the mother was approached and the advisability of such a move was explained to her. For the five years prior to 1953 this district was patrolled by the one Patrol Officer and the natives came to know him well and were in many cases, willing to hand their part-aboriginal children to him for removal as he thought fit. I came to them as a comparative stranger and I can quite realize their unwillingness to afford me the same, rather dubious, privilege.[107]

Lovegrove said that later, as a District Welfare Officer, he found cases of children who were suffering from neglect — not only part-Aboriginal children, but white children as well. In such cases, he

[106] O'Loughlin J, *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, 11 August 2000, para 28

[107] O'Loughlin J, *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, 11 August 2000, para 372

normally brought the child brought before the court so that it could make a declaration whether the child was neglected. The child would then be placed in the care of the Director of Child Welfare. Lovegrove told the court he never received an instruction to bring in a part-Aboriginal child irrespective of the wishes of the child's family.[108]

The former Assistant Director of Welfare, Ted Milliken, rejected any suggestion that in his time in the Territory from 1955 there was a blanket policy of removal of part-Aboriginal children. He also denied there were policies that divorced part-Aboriginal children in institutions from their Aboriginal background or that prevented part-Aboriginal children from returning to their homes during holidays. He also said the Welfare Branch never attempted to prevent members of a child's family or community from visiting the child at the institution.[109]

Another former patrol officer, Jeremy Long, also denied he ever had any instructions or ever engaged in child removals.

> Were you, as a patrol officer, limiting yourself to the period that you were a cadet patrol officer and became a full patrol officer, given any instructions as to the collection of children? — No.
> Or to report upon children? — No, only as, insofar as they were members of the communities on cattle stations.
> Yes, and insofar as they were members of the community on a cattle station, to what extent were you asked to report upon them? — Primarily to check that they were there and record them in the census.
> Nothing beyond that? — We were interested in their general wellbeing.[110]

Harry Kitching, who was employed as a patrol officer from 1953 to 1960 in the Alice Springs division of the Native Affairs Branch, also told the court he had no recollection of 'ever being issued with written instructions regarding general policies and procedures affecting half-caste Aborigines'. He said that if he encountered a 'half-caste child who was neglected or at risk in any way' he considered that he had a responsibility to report that fact to his District Welfare Officer. Nevertheless, he maintained that he could only make a recommendation that a child be admitted to a hostel 'if the mother had consented to such a placement'. In his time as a patrol officer, he 'never heard of a child being removed forcibly or without consent of his or her mother'. It was 'quite rare for a half-caste child to move away from

[108] O'Loughlin J, *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, 11 August 2000, paras 301–2

[109] O'Loughlin J, *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, 11 August 2000, para 319

[110] O'Loughlin J, *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, 11 August 2000, para 303

their family and be admitted to a hostel'. Kitching acknowledged that, in making a determination that a child was neglected, a patrol officer had a discretionary power to exercise, but he maintained that, at all times, the paramount concern was the interests of the child. Kitching said that in his career in Aboriginal affairs he could only remember making two recommendations for the removal of a part-Aboriginal child. The first case was a girl from the Jay Creek Settlement in 1951 or 1952 when he was manager of that settlement. The second occasion was in 1956 when he recommended that Peter Gunner be removed from Utopia Station. [111]

Former patrol officer Colin Macleod, however, said during his employment from 1955 to 1958, he *had* been given instructions about the removal of children. He said it was it was permissible for patrol officers to recommend removal of part-Aboriginal children as long as it was in the best interests of the children. He believed children were never removed from those families where there was a father as well as a mother. Furthermore, he had never personally removed a child, even though he had recommended removals. [112]

Leslie Wilson, former superintendent of several Aboriginal settlements, including Haasts Bluff, Yuendumu, the Bungalow at Alice Springs, and Bagot Reserve at Darwin, testified that, in his 30 years with the Native Affairs Branch, he was never involved in the removal of a part-Aboriginal child from the child's family or community, although he did acknowledge that he 'was aware that there was such a practice ... it was just sort of common knowledge, I guess.' Wilson was later asked whether he had ever heard patrol officers suggest that their most detested task was the removal of part-Aboriginal children from their families. He answered: 'Yes, if they spoke of that at all, I'd say that it was quite traumatic if they had to do that sort of thing.' [113]

In 1957, when the new Welfare Ordinance came into operation, it imposed an additional legal hurdle on the Native Affairs department, but did not change practice in the field all that much. Patrol officers still expressed much the same reluctance to remove children from their mothers as they had in the past. The main difference was that now they were required to provide tangible evidence of a mother's approval on a departmental form of consent. Because the mother was usually illiterate, this became an inked impression of her thumbprint.

[111] O'Loughlin J, *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, 11 August 2000, paras 765–6

[112] O'Loughlin J, *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, 11 August 2000, para 307

[113] O'Loughlin J, *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, 11 August 2000, para 320

From 1957 onwards, the only children removed to Darwin or Alice Springs, according to former welfare officer Ray Vincent, were those 'brought in on a mother's request for education and care, to give them opportunity, and that would be done with the mother's consent. Others were admitted ... by the mothers themselves directly conferring with the mission'. Vincent said that it was a matter for the 'patrol officer to talk with the mother and obtain her consent and signature if necessary'. If the mother could not sign a document, the process was 'a thumbprint'. He could not recall any circumstances where a patrol officer took a child without the mother's consent.

In the case of Peter Gunner, Justice O'Loughlin concluded that his mother Topsy had, by putting her thumbprint on the consent form, agreed to his removal from Utopia Station to St Mary's Hostel in Alice Springs in 1956 to be 'educated and trained in accordance with accepted European standards'. The other applicant, Lorna Cubillo, could not substantiate that she had been forcibly removed from Phillip Creek to the Retta Dixon home in Darwin in 1947 because no records of why she had left Phillip Creek had survived. Nor could she establish that she was at that time in the care of an adult Aboriginal person whose consent to her removal was not obtained.[114]

Nonetheless, it was the cumulative evidence of the patrol officers and welfare officers — the people doing the frontline case work who the Human Rights Commission chose not to hear — that did most to persuade Justice O'Loughlin to find that the Commonwealth government did *not* have a policy for the universal removal of part-Aboriginal children.

THE HALF-CASTE AS OUTCAST

> You'd find one of these kids running around a camp. Then you'd find out where the mother was — and she's probably got broken arms, broken fingers, she's been mutilated for having this half-caste kid — who in certain cases was belted as well.
>
> — Les Penhall, patrol officer 1946–1955, interviewed in 1994[115]

> Half-caste kids would now and again turn up at missions with spear marks and signs of horrific beatings. Babies were occasionally abandoned and young children left to fend for themselves. 'Yella fellas' could find themselves in a no-man's land and a no-win situation.
>
> — Colin Macleod, patrol officer 1955–1958, writing in 1997[116]

[114] O'Loughlin J, *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, 11 August 2000, paras 9–11, 106, 511

[115] Interview with Annette Roberts, *Sister Eileen*, p 176

[116] Macleod, *Patrol in the Dreamtime*, p 176

During their Federal Court action against the Commonwealth, counsel for Lorna Cubillo and Peter Gunner referred to 'the myth' of the 'half-caste as outcast' and argued that there was no justification for the belief by patrol officers that Aboriginal people of full-descent rejected part-Aborigines. However, responding to counsel's claim that this was an ill-informed generalization, Justice O'Loughlin said: 'Regrettably, I cannot agree.' He pointed to the evidence given in the case about this kind of rejection.

> There was evidence both ways: evidence of warmth and loving care for the children on the one hand: evidence of death and rejection on the other. I mention a few examples from the evidence that, in my opinion, are of sufficient weight to reject the applicants' submission. Mrs Harris and Mrs Matthews both recounted sad stories of rejection and death of part Aboriginal children. The applicants' own witness, GK, conceded that he understood that his life, as a small child, had been at risk. The concern about death and rejection was touched upon by some of the former public servants. Mr Ford referred to a parent 'who may be in trouble' for having a part Aboriginal child. Mr Les Wilson talked of a part Aboriginal child at risk of being 'ostracized'. Mrs Moy claimed that there was a habit of killing one of twins. Finally, Mr Gunner believed Florrie Ware when she told him that his mother had put him on an anthill.[117]

The revelation of this last incident became the most dramatic issue in the case. It initially appeared in an affidavit by Dora McLeod who, with her late husband, owned the lease on Utopia Station on the Sandover River in central Australia. Peter Gunner was born on the station in 1948 and was removed from there in 1956 to St Mary's Hostel in Alice Springs. When Gunner's mother, Topsy Kundrilba, was employed as a house girl at the Utopia homestead she was obviously pregnant. Mrs McLeod's affidavit continued:

> I didn't see the baby after Topsy gave birth. I was quite shocked when she turned up to start work at the house one morning and had obviously given birth since the previous day. I can still remember asking her about the baby. I said 'Which way picanniney?' Topsy definitely understood what I meant — what happened with the baby, where is it ... She just giggled at me as she always did when I asked her a question. When I asked her again she told me the baby had gone, that it had been put down a rabbit burrow. I understood this to mean the baby had been killed.
>
> I had heard of aborigines killing their babies if there was something wrong with the baby or if it wasn't wanted or the mother couldn't man-

[117] O'Loughlin J, *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, 11 August 2000, para 1148

> age it. I was quite shocked but I considered that it was tribal business, their way of life and I never interfered in those things.[118]

Peter Gunner himself had heard a similar story. In an interview with social worker Eileen Mosely, he said that when he was a baby his mother tried to kill him. She had left him on an anthill to die. The interview took place at Mosely's home, where she made a recording of it long before he had seen lawyers about the case before Justice O'Loughlin. The recording was subpoenaed for the subsequent trial. Gunner confirmed that his cousin had told him his mother

> wanted to kill me. She wanted to let the ants eat us alive and apparently my mother's sister was the one that went back and got me from the ant's nest and kept me and grew me up.[119]

The explanation for his mother's enmity was found in a letter Dora McLeod wrote in 1953 to the Alice Springs office of the Native Affairs Branch, asking for Peter's mother to be provided with government maintenance. 'Because Topsy Kundrilba has no husband is the reason why we have entered her on the maintenance list, as she is an outcast as far as the blacks are concerned.' In her affidavit to the court, McLeod explained what she meant by 'outcast':

> By then I was well aware of Topsy's status in the native camp. She was a full-blood woman herself but she had a half-caste child and in those days if you were a half-caste you didn't belong to the black people and you didn't belong to the white people. Because Topsy had a half-caste child she was treated as an outcast in the camp. She wasn't being looked after or helped in the camp, she didn't have a husband, which I'm sure she would have by that age if she didn't have the half-caste baby, and she was dependent on our support and rations to get by.

After the failure of her initial attempt to kill Peter, his mother still neglected him. Dora McLeod kept a diary whose entry for 16 November 1950 recorded: 'Peter very sick in camp.' She called the Flying Doctor Service in Alice Springs. In her affidavit, McLeod said:

> I remember the situation quite clearly. Topsy's baby, Peter, was in the camp and was in a totally neglected state. It was shocking. He was very sick. In general all the babies in the camp were well looked after and

[118] O'Loughlin J, *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, 11 August 2000, para 803

[119] Quoted by barrister Elizabeth Hollingworth, appearing for the Commonwealth, in *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, Federal Court, Darwin, 3 March 1999

> healthy, but we could see that this baby was completely neglected and looked to be almost starving.[120]

Thanks to antibiotics prescribed by the Flying Doctor, the boy survived again. However, his general condition soon attracted the attention of a Native Affairs Branch patrol officer, Ted Evans, who found his health so poor he recommended his mother should take him to Alice Springs Hospital for 'examination and medical attention'. Subsequently, patrol officer Harry Kitching mentioned the boy in his field reports in 1954 and 1955. Eventually in 1956, he could advise his superiors:

> The mother desires that Peter be admitted to St. Mary's Hostel, to enable him to be educated to a European standard and removed from native camp life. Recommended by A/Patrol Officer Kitching

This was followed by a departmental form requesting the placement, and bearing the thumbprint of his mother. Kitching subsequently transported the boy from Utopia Station to Alice Springs.[121] Justice O'Loughlin found:

> the documents that were available point strongly to the Director, through his officers, having given close consideration to the welfare of the young Peter. Most importantly, there was his mother's thumbprint on a form of request that asked that Peter be taken to St Mary's and given a western education. I have concluded that Peter went to St Mary's at his mother's request.[122]

The evidence in Peter Gunner's case was far from the only indication at the trial about the status of the half-caste as outcast. Former patrol officer Colin Macleod said he was aware that children could be ostracized and maltreated because of their half-caste status. He was questioned on this issue:

> Do you recall what your instructions were as to what it was that you were to look out for in respect of half-coloured children? — If they were being stood aside in the, in the camps and not given a, a proper place. Sometimes they were scoffed and scorned at in full-blooded Aboriginal camps,

[120] O'Loughlin J, *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, 11 August 2000, para 804

[121] A full account of the surviving documents and evidence in court about Peter Gunner's removal is in O'Loughlin J, *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, 11 August 2000, paras 768–92

[122] O'Loughlin J, *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, 11 August 2000, para 11

and sometimes they were not fed. Sometimes they were teased, so there were different problems with them.[123]

Leslie Wilson, the former superintendent of several Aboriginal settlements in central Australia, agreed:

> In a traditional society and there was a part-coloured Aboriginal born to — child born to a full-blood woman in the tribal — you know, in the tribal situation, that if — if that child wasn't accepted or their mother was being ostracized and she couldn't properly look after it or join in the — in the tribal sense properly and she was ostracized by that community and the people — and the child wasn't looked after or — I think the child's interest was the main thing and the main thing about anybody removing a child. That was my understanding of it.[124]

Evidence of this kind has come not only from white officials but also Aboriginal people. In Central Australia, some of the latter have said traditional culture sanctioned the killing of half-caste babies. As a girl growing up on Utopia Station north-east of Alice Springs, Rosalie Kunoth-Monks, the daughter of a traditional mother and a mixed-descent father, witnessed the deaths of several 'part-white' babies. In an interview in 1994 she said:

> In a lot of situations not even the Aboriginal people wanted half-castes. Up this way, if they had half-castes, they killed them ... The children killed were from white men passing through, abusing an Aboriginal woman for one night stands or for two night stands ... and usually these young ladies were promised to a husband, so they couldn't have a half-caste child and then go into a relationship with their promised husband ... grandmothers stepped on [the babies'] chests and smothered them, crushed their chests.[125]

Les Penhall, who joined the Native Affairs Branch as a cadet patrol officer in 1946 and spent nine years in the job, said one of the central concerns of patrol officers was the lack of proper tribal kinship ties of half-caste girls. This determined how they were treated in the camps when young, and what happened to them when they grew up. In an interview recorded in 1994 he said:

> The half-caste girls were the ones we were particularly worried about. Not having a subsection name within the Aboriginal community, once they reached the age of puberty the man or the consort [could] sell that girl to anyone in the camp — she became an economic asset ...

[123] O'Loughlin J, *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, 11 August 2000, para 308

[124] O'Loughlin J, *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, 11 August 2000, para 320

[125] Interview with Annette Roberts, *Sister Eileen*, p 176

> exchanged in the earliest days for tins of jam, a few sticks of tobacco, and later for bags of sugar and a bit of money.[126]

In his book *Patrol in the Dreamtime*, Colin Macleod confirmed the same point:

> Of even more concern was the mistreatment of part-coloured girls living about the drovers' plants. Full-blooded Aboriginals and part-Aboriginals did not always see themselves as one people, even if they had blood relatives. Part-coloured people often saw themselves a cut above their full-blooded cousins and half-brothers. When young girls approached puberty, there was the prospect of them not having the protection of either culture.

Macleod said that these girls' lack of a place in tribal society meant they 'often ended up in limbo, having to do the best they could in cattle stations and along the stock routes'.

> Young part-coloured girls became playthings of the outback, to be used and swapped like currency. At the drovers' camps I sometimes caught a glimpse of these girls, who were hidden away when our curiosity became obvious. They depended for their livelihood and safety on the whims of the men in the camps. 'Yella fella' girls were talked of as 'studs', so that a girl might be known as 'Old Jack Riley's stud', for instance. Who would ever know they existed, let alone how they were treated, or what happened to their babies? There were many successful cases of part-coloured girls being removed for their own protection by the welfare authorities of the time.[127]

THE BIG REMOVAL FROM PHILLIP CREEK IN 1947

At the end of the Second World War, an Aboriginal camp and ration depot that had originally formed on Banka Banka Station, on the Stuart Highway north of Tennant Creek, moved about 60 kilometres south to Phillip Creek. Here the little settlement came under the management of missionaries working for the interdenominational body, the Aborigines Inland Mission. One day in July 1947, a truck arrived and sixteen of the settlement's children got aboard. The superintendent of the Retta Dixon Home in Darwin, Amelia Shankelton, supervised the boarding and then accompanied the driver and children on the three-day drive to Darwin. Staff at the home were waiting for their arrival and took them in as residents. Some remained at Retta Dixon for more than a decade.

One of these children, who in 1947 was an 8-year-old girl named Lorna Nelson, eventually assisted Barbara Cummings to write her 1990 history of Retta Dixon, *Take This Child*. Under her married

[126] Interview with Annette Roberts, *Sister Eileen*, p 177
[127] Macleod, *Patrol in the Dreamtime*, pp 165–6

name of Lorna Cubillo she became a speaker at the 'Going Home' conference organized by Cummings in 1994. The lawyers who organised the major test case of the Stolen Generations against the Commonwealth government chose her to be one of the two plaintiffs.

Her Aboriginal mother died when Lorna was a baby. She never knew her father, a white man, but was cared for by her grandmother until she too died. After that, a woman named Maisie looked after her in the shifting Aboriginal camp and became the only 'mother' Lorna remembered. Maisie was probably still caring for Lorna and her other children at Phillip Creek, or she might have been working at Banka Banka Station, when Lorna boarded the truck for Darwin in 1947. In any case, Lorna was part of an extended Aboriginal family composed primarily of women and children, living under the care of an Aboriginal mission and, though an orphan, could not be regarded as destitute or neglected at the time.

In the case of *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, some of the adult women who were at the Phillip Creek Settlement in July 1947 still remembered the day the sixteen children left. In evidence to the court, they said it was an occasion of great sadness and distress. Even though Amelia Shankelton later wrote an article about the removals saying that the parents of the children had agreed to send them to Retta Dixon to be educated and were well-prepared for the removal day,[128] Justice O'Loughlin preferred the version of events given by the now elderly Aboriginal women. One of the witnesses was Eileen Napanangka, a daughter of Maisie. Justice O'Loughlin summarized her evidence:

> Eileen said that she could remember the day when Lorna and the other children were taken away in a truck. She said that she and her people knew that the children were going to Darwin and that she knew, before Lorna went to Darwin, of the Retta Dixon Home as a place for schooling ... Eileen said that her mother, Maisie, Lorna's surrogate mother, was present with her when the children were removed and that they were both crying — she said that all the mothers and the children were crying ... Eileen then said that Maisie went to Banka Banka and, when asked why she left Phillip Creek, she answered 'she was sorry'. Once again the poignant use of the word 'sorry' pointed to the deep emotional hurt that the parting with the children had caused.[129]

In the end, the judge dismissed Cubillo's case because it 'failed to reach the required evidentiary onus'. There were too many gaps in the evidence, too many people were dead, memories had faded and

[128] Amelia Shankelton's article was in the newsletter, *Our Aim*, Aborigines Inland Mission, 17 September, 1947

[129] O'Loughlin J, *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, 11 August 2000, paras 475–6

documents had been lost. Cubillo failed to establish that she was, at that time, in the care of an adult Aboriginal person whose consent to her removal was not obtained. Moreover, there was now no way of knowing what went on in the mind of Frank Moy, the Director of Native Affairs in 1947, when he approved the removal and detention of the children from Phillip Creek. 'I cannot assume, out of a feeling of sympathy for Mrs Cubillo,' Justice O'Loughlin said, 'that Mr Moy failed to do his statutory functions.'[130]

However, one thing the judge did accept was that several of the Aboriginal women who gave evidence about how distressed they were about the removal of the children, nonetheless strongly approved of them gaining a western education. One of them, Annie Napurrula, was a woman who still adhered to traditional culture, performing in women's ceremonies and teaching bush medicine and bush tucker to schoolchildren at Tennant Creek. In her evidence, she had agreed that before the removal, Amelia Shankelton had consulted her and assured her that the children were going to a 'better home, better school, better food'. Other mothers were given the same assurance. Yet they were very distressed at the children's departure. This demonstrated how apparently contrary attitudes could be held in a perfectly rational way. Justice O'Loughlin observed:

> Annie, who has five children, said that her three daughters went to a Uniting Church school in Darwin. The girls boarded at the school while Annie lived in a Housing Commission house at Tennant Creek. At that stage, she was working as a cleaner in the local hospital. In re-examination she was asked whether it was her decision to send her children away to school. Whether the answer was expected or not, it was — 'Yes! I sent them away myself'. Once more, the contemporary attitude of the Aboriginal person to western education surfaced. Annie is a person who is deeply steeped in her Aboriginal culture and it would be an affront to her to suggest that she should abandon it for western civilisation. But that did not prevent her from recognizing the importance of a western education; she, and others like her, have shown their determination to have their children introduced to western culture, even if, as in Annie's case, it meant that she and her daughters had to suffer the loneliness of separation while the girls were at boarding school.[131]

THE HIGH COURT AND THE QUESTION OF GENOCIDE

This chapter began with a quotation from Robert French's cover blurb for Rowena MacDonald's book *Between Two Worlds* in 1995.

[130] O'Loughlin J, *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, 11 August 2000, para 1245

[131] O'Loughlin J, *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth*, 11 August 2000, para 500

When he wrote this, French was a Federal Court judge and president of the Native Title Tribunal. In 2009, the Rudd Labor government surprisingly appointed him Chief Justice of the High Court. Until then, French's legal track record gave little indication he would ever be a contender for our highest judicial position. His career had attracted little public attention. The latter, of course, should not be of any great consideration in the appointment of a Chief Justice. However, his public endorsement of MacDonald's book, without checking whether its claims were well founded or not, should be a matter of public concern. In this chapter, I have tried to show how profoundly mistaken that book is. Rather than portraying, in French's words, 'a compelling picture of the benevolent inhumanity of man to man', MacDonald's book was a serious distortion of the history of Aboriginal child welfare in the Northern Territory. It was also a defamation of a considerable number of people who cared for children in distress and helped many gain an education that allowed them entry to the modern world. It would be very difficult for anyone today who has read the full judgement of Justice Maurice O'Loughlin in *Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth* to re-state with any conviction the public sentiments of Justice French in 1995.

Similarly, it should now be just as difficult for any judge, or indeed anyone else who can read and knows where to look, to take seriously the claim that child removals in the Northern Territory amounted to genocide. That matter, too, has been before our courts. In fact, it went before the full bench of the High Court in the other major test case of the Stolen Generations, *Kruger v. Commonwealth; Bray v. Commonwealth*. In July 1997, the court dismissed the plaintiffs' case unanimously. That outcome, however, attracted very little public attention. The news media largely ignored it at the time and very few people outside legal circles ever heard of it then, or since. It seems that because it conflicted with the allegations about genocide in the *Bringing Them Home* report in May 1997, Australia's news media and political commentariat decided to pretend the decision did not exist. They did not like the finding so they airbrushed it from history.

Like the test case of Cubillo and Gunner, *Kruger v. Commonwealth; Bray v. Commonwealth* also arose from the 'Going Home' conference organized by Barbara Cummings in Darwin in 1994. The chief plaintiffs, Alec Kruger and George Bray, both attended the conference. Kruger maintained that in the late 1920s, aged two years, he was stolen from his family and subsequently grew up at the Kahlin Compound, Pine Creek and the Bungalow.[132] In the 1930s, George Bray,

[132] Alec Kruger and Gerard Waterford, *Alone on the Soaks: The Life and Times of Alec Kruger*, IAD Press, Alice Springs, 2007

aged nine years, was removed from his half-caste parents in Alice Springs.

Together with seven other people with similar experiences, their lawyers challenged the constitutional validity of the Northern Territory's Aboriginals Ordinance of 1918, which allowed Chief Protectors and Directors of Native Affairs control over the movement and restraint of Aboriginal people, both adults and children, throughout the Territory. There were a number of constitutional issues raised, the main one hinging on whether the Commonwealth actually had the right to make such laws for the Territory. Among its several major arguments, the plaintiffs said the ordinance was contrary to an implied constitutional right to freedom from any law that authorized the crime of genocide. The plaintiffs cited several provisions of the United Nations' Genocide Convention that the ordinance purportedly violated, including:

- The removal and transfer of children of a racial group in a manner calculated to bring about the group's physical destruction in whole or in part;
- Actions likely to cause serious mental harm to members of a racial or ethnic group;
- The deliberate infliction on a racial or ethnic group of conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.

This was the constitutional test case of the Stolen Generations. The High Court subsequently used the term 'Stolen Generations' in the name it gave to its judgement.[133] It was a test case because, had the court found for the plaintiffs, then similar legislation passed by the states would also have been unconstitutional. Hence the state Attorneys-General of New South Wales, Western Australia and South Australia became parties to the case, appointing their own counsel to act as intervenors.

In its judgement of July 1997 the full bench of the High Court unanimously rejected all the claims. Five of the six judges commented specifically on the intentions of the Aboriginals Ordinance in relation to genocide. Chief Justice Gerard Brennan found that question 'unnecessary to answer' because the whole case failed on other grounds, but the other judges recorded the following findings:

> Justice Dawson —The first thing that may be said is there is nothing in the 1918 Ordinance, even if the acts authorized by it otherwise fell within the definition of genocide, which authorizes acts committed with intent

[133] Kruger v. Commonwealth ("Stolen Generations case") [1997] HCA 27; (1997) 190 CLR 1; (1997) 146 ALR 126; (1997) 71 ALJR 991 (31 July 1997)

> to destroy in whole or in part any Aboriginal group. On the contrary, as has already been observed, the powers conferred by the 1918 Ordinance were required to be exercised in the best interests of the Aboriginals concerned or of the Aboriginal population generally. The acts authorised do not, therefore, fall within the definition of genocide contained in the Genocide Convention.
>
> Justice Toohey — There is nothing in the Ordinance, according to it the ordinary principles of construction, which would justify a conclusion that it authorized acts 'with intent to destroy, in whole or in part' the plaintiffs' racial group.
>
> Justice Gaudron — Although it may be taken that the Ordinance authorized the forcible transfer of Aboriginal children from their racial group, the settled principles of statutory construction, to which reference has been made, compel the conclusion that it did not authorize persons to remove those children 'with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, ... [their] racial ... group, as such'. It follows that the Ordinance did not authorize acts of genocide as defined in the Genocide Convention and, if there is a limitation of the kind which I favour, it was not infringed by the Ordinance. [ellipses in original]
>
> Justice McHugh — The 1918 Ordinance did not authorize genocide. Art II of the Genocide Convention relevantly defines genocide to mean certain acts 'committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such'. The acts include '[i]mposing measures intended to prevent births within the group' and '[f]orcibly transferring children of the group to another group'. There is, however, nothing in the 1918 Ordinance that could possibly justify a construction of its provisions that would authorize the doing of acts 'with intent to destroy, in whole or in part' the aboriginal race.
>
> Justice Gummow — I agree with Dawson J that acts authorized by the 1918 Ordinance which took place after the ratification became effective on 12 January 1951 did not fall within the definition of 'genocide' contained in the Convention.

The High Court established that, although specifically directed at one racial group, the Territory's 1918 Aboriginals Ordinance, and its successor, the 1957 Welfare Ordinance, were *not* examples of legislation designed to be punitive towards that racial group, let alone instruments of genocide. Rather, the intentions of those who enacted them were that they be exercised in the best interests of Aboriginal people. They were items of welfare or beneficial legislation.

The full bench's judgement in 1997 did not address the question of how the Territory ordinance — or similar legislation in the states — was actually implemented. Nor was it asked to rule on the nature of the policies that guided the implementation or whether, when exercised in the field, they were followed in the way intended. That still left open, in 1997, the possibility that causes of action alleging

breaches of statutory duty and duty of care could be pursued on the grounds that, in specific acts of removing and/or detaining children, government officers acted with a wanton and reckless disregard for their welfare and rights. The failure of the case brought by Cubillo and Gunner meant that charge could not be generally substantiated in the Northern Territory. The only legal cases with any potential credibility would be those made by individuals in some states such as Bruce Trevorrow, who Justice Gray of the South Australian Supreme Court found in 2007 was illegally removed from his family and suffered badly as a result. Up to 2009, he was the only person who could establish this happened to him. But as far as Australia's High Court is concerned, the claims of racist legislation and genocide — the core allegations of the Stolen Generations thesis — are legally extinct. The historians and political activists who invented the concept proved incapable of substantiating their case.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The hollow apologies of Tasmania and Victoria

> The Act was passed unanimously in both Houses of Parliament in November 2006, evoking scenes rarely observed in 150 years of Tasmanian Parliament. It was reported that the public galleries of both the Legislative Council and the House of Assembly were crowded with onlookers who clapped, cheered and cried as politicians of all political persuasions spoke in favour of the legislation.
>
> — Tasmanian government website describing the passing of Stolen Generations of Aboriginal Children Act 2006 to provide $5 million compensation to the state's Stolen Generations.

> Removing children from their homes simply on the basis of race is unthinkable today. But it is fundamental that we formally recognize what occurred in previous generations.
>
> — Premier of Tasmania, Paul Lennon, on making compensation payments to the state's Stolen Generations, January 2008

In January 2008, the Tasmanian government announced it would pay 84 Tasmanian people $58,000 each because they claimed to be members of the Stolen Generations. 'It doesn't seem much for a lifetime of cultural isolation,' Premier Paul Lennon said at the time. 'It is intended as a gesture: a statement that we are genuinely sorry for the past policy of forced separation.' [1]

[1] Paul Lennon, 'Cash is a Mere Gesture', *Australian*, 29 January 2008, p 12

To make the gift a bipartisan gesture, the Labor Premier Lennon asked one of his predecessors, the former Liberal Premier Ray Groom, to assess those eligible. Groom readily agreed. Of 151 applications he received, Groom found 84 people were Stolen Generations victims and 22 were the children of victims who had since died. The living victims got $58,000 each while the children of victims got $5000 each.

Tasmania was the first state or territory to establish a compensation fund for the Stolen Generations. So far, it is the only one. Elsewhere, in New South Wales, South Australia and the Northern Territory, when those claiming this status have applied to the courts for compensation, the government concerned has rejected the application and appointed counsel to defend it. More than a decade after the *Bringing Them Home* report, all those who have gone to the courts have lost their cases, except one person in South Australia.[2] Rather than seeing himself as the odd man out, however, Premier Lennon thought this innovation by the smallest and economically poorest state would show up all the others:

> I aim to keep Tasmania at the forefront of advancing the reconciliation debate. And I hope the nation will recognize and respond to the positive agenda we are setting.[3]

The most conspicuous oddity of the Tasmanian example was that while the Premier's media releases spoke of children being removed because of their race, his new legislation was careful not to mention that topic at all. To be eligible for payments under the state's Stolen Generations of Aboriginal Children Act 2006, claimants only have to establish they were Aborigines, they had once been made a ward of the state, and that they weren't fostered out to Aboriginal families. They didn't have to be removed *because* of their race. In Tasmania, a member of the Stolen Generations had to only fulfil the following conditions:

> An applicant must:
> 1. be an Aboriginal person within the meaning of the Aboriginal Lands Act 1995
> 2. have been living on October 16, 2006, and
> 3. have been admitted or declared as a child of the State, or a ward of the State, under the Infants' Welfare Act 1935 or the Child Welfare Act 1960;

[2] Chris Cuneen and Julia Grix, 'Chronology of the Stolen Generations Litigation 1993–2003', *Indigenous Law Bulletin*, 17, 2003, http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/ILB/2003/17.html. This list also includes a group of Victorians granted $4000 each for sexual assault under that state's Criminal Compensation Fund.

[3] Lennon, 'Cash is a Mere Gesture'

> on or before December 31, 1975, and remained a child of the State, or a ward of the State, for a continuous period of 12 months or more, and not in the care of an Aboriginal family during that period.[4]

What was truly weird about the Tasmanian case was that this was one state where it was legally impossible for anyone to have been a member of the Stolen Generations in the period nominated by the Human Rights Commission, 1910 to 1970. Since 1876, when the last Tasmanian Aborigine, Truganini, died, the Tasmanian government could not possibly have been guilty of removing any child from its home 'simply on the basis of race', as Premier Lennon put it. After that date, Tasmanian governments presumed all the Tasmanian Aborigines had died out. The apparent absence of the race meant there were no laws based on race and no policies directed at race. As a result, Tasmanian Aboriginal people were not mentioned specifically in any state legislation or regulations until the 1970s. There had been no Protector of Aborigines since 1847 when the inhabitants of the government's old indigenous reserve on Flinders Island moved back to Oyster Cove on the main island. Although the government and some of the churches knew the small community that later emerged on Cape Barren Island was made up of descendents of the indigenous wives of the handful of Englishmen who had worked as Bass Strait sealers since the 1810s, the only legislation in which they figured was the 1912 Cape Barren Island Reserve Act, which leased them land there.

Even then, the island's inhabitants were not regarded by anyone, including themselves, as real Aborigines, or indeed, as anything but 'islanders' or 'straitsmen'. Molly Mallett, who grew up on Cape Barren Island in the 1920s and 1930s, recalled: 'We knew we were different but they — our parents — never told us we were Aborigines.'[5] Similarly, another member of the Cape Barren Islander community, Annette Mansell, said in a film interview in 1978:

> I'm not an Aboriginal. I'm only a descendant of one. There are no Aboriginals now. There's not much in any of us. There's no tradition in Tasmania with the Aboriginals.[6]

[4] The Act under which Tasmanian payments were made was the Stolen Generations of Aboriginal Children Act 2006 (No 34 of 2006)

[5] Molly Mallet, *My Past — Their Future: Stories from Cape Barren Island*, Blubber Head Pres/Riawunna Centre for Aboriginal Education, Hobart, 2001, p 41

[6] Interview in the Rhys Jones and Tom Haydon film, *The Last Tasmanian*, Artis Film Productions, Sydney, 1978. For other comments on the rejection by Cape Barren Islanders of identification as Aborigines, see Patsy Adam-Smith, *Moonbird People*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1965, p 220

She spoke at the same time as the notion of Aboriginality was being reinvented on the Tasmanian mainland by modern, urban, political activists.[7]

The case made here is not controversial. It is actually supported by historians of Tasmanian child welfare who otherwise accept the truth of the Stolen Generations thesis. For instance, Caroline Evans and Naomi Parry, two comparatively recent PhD candidates who each wrote their theses on Tasmanian child welfare in the period 1880 to 1940,[8] have jointly argued: 'Aboriginal people were never specifically mentioned in state legislation'.

> It is certain that Aboriginal children were swept up within the Tasmanian child welfare system in the early twentieth century, under the definitions of neglect applied to other children. However, the Tasmanian government would not recognize what we now call Aboriginality, so it is not surprising that Indigenous background was never cited as a reason for removal, as it had been in New South Wales. We found only two passing references to the Aboriginality of state wards, amongst hundreds of records.[9]

Bringing Them Home, however, treated Tasmania as yet another site for the Stolen Generations. It wrote:

> The forcible removal of indigenous children from their families occurred during two periods in Tasmania. The first commenced with the European occupation of Van Diemen's Land (as Tasmania was called until 1856) in 1803 and lasted until the middle of the nineteenth century. The second commenced in the 1930s with the forcible removal of Indigenous children from Cape Barren Island under general child welfare legislation and continues into the present.[10]

The major historical source on which the report relied for the colonial period was Lyndall Ryan's book *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*. In my book on Tasmania, Volume One of the *Fabrication of Aboriginal*

[7] I discuss the reinvention of Tasmanian Aboriginality in Volume One of the *Fabrication of Aboriginal History*, Macleay Press, Sydney, 2002, pp 431–6

[8] Caroline Evans, Protecting the Innocent, Tasmania's Neglected Children, Their Parents and State Care, 1890–1918, PhD thesis, University of Tasmania, 1999; Naomi Parry, 'Such a Longing', Black and White Children in Welfare in New South Wales and Tasmania, 1880–1940, PhD thesis, University of New South Wales, 2007

[9] Caroline Evans and Naomi Parry, 'Vessels of Progressivism? Tasmanian State Girls and Eugenics, 1900–1940', *Australian Historical Studies*, 117, October 2001, p 323

[10] Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children From Their Families*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, April 1997, p 91

History, I demonstrated that nothing Lyndall Ryan has written about Tasmanian history should be trusted. Her work was driven by the radical agenda of Tasmanian Aboriginal politics. On the removal of children, she was especially unreliable. She gave false accounts of the contents of orders given by colonial governors, she misrepresented several of her primary sources, and she exaggerated the number of Aboriginal children in the care of settlers. Ryan claimed one governor consigned Aboriginal children to an orphan school that did not even exist during his time in the colony.[11]

For its historical account of the 1930s to the present, *Bringing Them Home* adopted a similar methodological approach. Before its investigation had even begun, it reached its findings about stolen children and decided the political agenda it would recommend. During its nationwide tour of community hearings, the Human Rights Commission went to Flinders Island in December 1995 and held a meeting at the old Aboriginal settlement of Wybalenna. There, a lawyer for the inquiry announced (i) there had been a government policy of separation, (ii) its intention had been to remove children from their culture, and (iii) one of the inquiry's recommendations would be to rebuild Aboriginal culture.[12]

When they came to write *Bringing Them Home*, its authors knew full well that Tasmanian legislation never targeted non-white children as such. They admitted that Tasmania was an exception to the system of protection on the Australian mainland, and grudgingly acknowledged: 'Until the late 1960s Tasmanian governments resolutely insisted that Tasmania did not have an Aboriginal population, just some "half-caste" people.'[13] Their report nonetheless presented a narrative of indigenous families enduring an unequal struggle against devious authorities determined to use any means to steal their children.

> Although the Tasmanian government did not formally adopt a policy of removing Indigenous children from the Island, the *Infants Welfare Act 1935* was used to remove these children from their families. From 1928 until 1980 the head teacher on Cape Barren was appointed a special constable with the powers and responsibilities of a police constable, including the power to remove a child for neglect under the child welfare legislation. A shed at the back of the school sometimes served as a temporary lock-up.
>
> Poverty, alcohol abuse, and the refusal of the Islanders to adopt an agricultural lifestyle as specified in the 1912 Act and the surveillance of

[11] Windschuttle, *Fabrication of Aboriginal History, Volume One*, pp 52–7

[12] Peter Collenette, 'Guilt Fires Inquiry Into Taken Children', *Examiner*, Launceston, 21 December 1995, p 9

[13] *Bringing Them Home*, p 29

> that lifestyle that Act entailed put Indigenous families at risk of losing their children. The reliance of community members upon each other to care for their children in times of difficulty was regarded not as a strength but as an indication of neglect.[14]

Moreover, the Commission's authors also knew that for any Tasmanian child to be charged with neglect and removed from its parents, a hearing had to be held before a magistrate sitting as a children's court. So they portrayed this process as one where the magistrates were always prejudiced against Cape Barren Islander parents and where the odds were so stacked against them they had no hope of resisting the force of authority.

> Although a parent was entitled to appear at court to argue that the child was not neglected, this theoretical possibility took no account of the remoteness of mainland and non-Indigenous legal processes from the Island communities, the speed with which removals occurred, the parents' lack of knowledge of their rights under the law, their financial inability to get to the court in Launceston in time and the fact that no legal assistance was available to them.[15]

One of its unstated assumptions was that magistrates of the period were so biased against these parents they overlooked how disadvantaged their procedures were. This was a slur that none of the still living Tasmanian magistrates were given an opportunity to correct. Moreover, to argue that children were wrongly found to be neglected simply because they had Aboriginal ancestry was to accuse the Tasmanian judicial system of being inherently corrupt, indeed racist. Both the authors who made this accusation, Ronald Wilson and Mick Dodson, had high legal qualifications — Wilson was a former judge of the High Court — so they knew what they were doing. To compound this offence by refusing to provide the magistrates with the opportunity to publicly answer the accusation was to treat them most unjustly. Wilson, in particular, disgraced his own reputation by this action. Wilson and Dodson did not publicly call Tasmania's magistrates racist, but they did call witnesses to shore up the case that this was how islander parents felt. They heard Tasmania's chief Aboriginal political activist Michael Mansell, a man born and raised in Launceston, who described the helplessness the islanders felt before the overwhelming force of white authority.

> We never questioned the right of any white person, whether they had a blue uniform or not, to come into our homeland more or less to do what

[14] *Bringing Them Home*, p 94
[15] *Bringing Them Home*, p 97

> they liked ... It was just the way of life and we grew up accepting that white people had some greater right than we did.[16]

However, other people who were unable to give evidence to the same hearings had a different perspective. Some who knew the islander community's brushes with the law in Launceston later portrayed its members as anything but innocent and helpless victims. Indeed, they said the islanders knew how to work the legal and welfare systems well, and had their own allies within them. One former officer of the Tasmanian Department of Social Welfare, Max Chugg, gave a very different version of how the courts normally treated Cape Barren Islander children.

> I worked in the Launceston office of the Department of Social Welfare in the first half of the 1970s and kept the Children's Court Register. At that time the District Child Welfare Officer had the power to veto any attempts by police to prosecute any child. He was on extremely friendly terms with the Cape Barren Islanders who had open access to his office. When Cape Barren Islander children were in trouble the mothers made a bee line for the District Child Welfare Officer's office, and although I know that these children got into more than their fair share of mischief, I have no recollection of one ever going to court.[17]

The Airbrushing of Molly Mallett

In the 1950s and 1960s, when Cape Barren Islander children came before a children's court for being neglected, destitute, or in trouble with the law, the magistrate's first option was *not* to use the opportunity to confine them to a white institution to eradicate their Aboriginality. Instead, magistrates and child welfare officers normally sought to place them in the foster care. As I demonstrate below from the Tasmanian government's own figures, foster care was by far the dominant form of placement for part-Aboriginal children removed under the state's child welfare laws. A small number of islander families customarily took in children in this situation. The person who took the biggest single number was Mary Frances Mallett, better known as Aunty Molly Mallet.

Born on Cape Barren Island in 1926, Mallett moved during the Second World War to Launceston where she spent most of her adult life. She later became involved in Aboriginal education and childcare but her most sustained role was in the foster care of islander children. While her own children were growing up, Mallett became a foster carer for indigenous children who were wards of the state. Child welfare officers placed her first two foster children with her after their

[16] *Bringing Them Home*, pp 95–6
[17] Max Chugg, personal communication, 29 January 2008

mother drowned on Cape Barren Island and there was no one else to look after them. After that, she was involved in 'fostering so many children that she lost count'.[18] Some of the children she took in were neglected and destitute; others were young offenders placed with her as an alternative to the juvenile corrective institution, the Ashley Home for Boys.[19] Mallett also worked informally with the town's islander community, supporting those who moved from Cape Barren Island by arranging board and accommodation for them or for those of their children who came to Launceston to go to school.

It was no accident that Mallet became the principal foster career of Cape Barren Island children. There is good evidence that this was the policy of the government at the time. In 1966 welfare guidelines were consolidated in the Procedural Manual for social welfare officers in the then Department of Social Welfare. The Procedural Manual provided specific advice and protocols on matters ranging from departmental administration to children in care, case history recording, wards of the state, foster homes and adoption. The manual noted that 'the Department is always reluctant to break the link between child and parent', and that foster care was the preferred option for all children made wards. Quoting from it, the Tasmanian government submission to the Human Rights Commission inquiry said that no explicit direction was given about the cultural or ethnic background of the child. Nonetheless:

> A successful foster home was considered to be one in which the child is accepted as a member of the family, and the Manual notes that placements with relatives as foster-parents were to be encouraged. It was also recognized that it would normally be to the advantage of the child to maintain contacts with parents wherever possible and even more so with siblings who may be placed elsewhere.[20]

If, as the theory of the Stolen Generations said, the true policy goal was to remove children on the basis of race so they never returned home, someone forgot to tell Tasmanian social workers. Since all the Cape Barren Islanders were related to one another in some way, Molly Mallett fitted the field officers' guidelines perfectly. Hence she was given a large number of children to care for. Yet today, the Tasmanian government insists these field officers were really acting to

[18] Tasmanian Government's Honour Roll of Women: Dr Mary Frances Mallett (Aunty Molly) AM

[19] Mallett, *My Past — Their Future*, pp 63–6

[20] *Tasmanian Government Submission to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children*, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Hobart, 13 August 1996, p A–22

deny removed children access to their community and their culture. Something doesn't make sense here.

By the time she died in 2005, Mallett's efforts had been rewarded with an honorary doctorate from the University of Tasmania and the award of Member of the Order of Australia. She was named in the Tasmanian government's submission to the Human Rights Commission's inquiry as 'the liaison person for the Cape Barren Islander community' from the late 1950s to 1967,[21] so it is clear the inquiry knew of both her existence and her significance. Strangely, though, when the Commission's inquiry held its Tasmanian hearings, it declined to call her.

Although she remained the community's most experienced member in the care of neglected and troubled children, the evidence of her life's work would have posed some obvious problems for the Stolen Generations thesis in that state. The opening passage of *Bringing Them Home* begins with a description by an unidentified woman about the childhood removal of her and her seven siblings from Cape Barren Island in the 1960s. It is one of the report's most harrowing scenes:

> So the next thing I remember was that they took us from there and we went to the hospital and I kept asking — because the children were screaming and the little brothers and sisters were just babies of course, and I couldn't move, they were all around me, around my neck and legs, yelling and screaming. I was all upset and didn't know what to do and I didn't know where we were going. I just thought: well, they're the police, they must know what they're doing. I suppose I've got to go with them, they're taking me to see Mum. You now this is what I honestly thought ...[22]

The passage concludes with the following note:

> Confidential submission 318, Tasmania: removal from Cape Barren Island, Tasmania, of 8 siblings in the 1960s. The children were fostered separately.

This account would have carried much less political impact if readers had known that when 'the children were fostered separately' a common practice of the authorities was to foster them with other Cape Barren Islander families. In its main discussion of Aboriginal child welfare in Tasmania, *Bringing Them Home* acknowledged that children in this period were placed in 'foster families' and 'group homes'. But it omitted any mention of islander involvement in these placements. It wrote: 'These children were sent to non-Indigenous institutions

[21] *Tasmanian Government Submission to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Inquiry*, p A–35

[22] *Bringing Them Home*, p 2

and later non-Indigenous foster families on the grounds that they were neglected.'[23] In other words, the Human Rights Commission misled its readers into thinking that all these families were non-Aboriginal. Hence, any trace of Molly Mallett's life work had to be airbrushed away.

THE TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT'S PURSUIT OF ASSIMILATION

Bringing Them Home portrayed the Tasmanian government relentlessly pursuing assimilation of the islanders for more than 50 years. Although the government did not recognize their Aboriginality, indigenous families, the report claimed, 'were known and targeted because their lifestyle was not "acceptable", they lived on Cape Barren and nearby islands and they usually had surnames which marked them as "half-castes"'.[24] A professed concern for children's health was one of the chief government strategies. Proposals for assimilation, the report observed, began to appear in the late 1920s in government reports that lamented the impoverished living conditions and poor health of children suffering sickness and malnutrition.[25] *Bringing Them Home* reported other inquiries in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s which made very similar findings. Most of the information it used came from reports written by pubic servants after investigations into the islanders' living conditions. Almost all this information was conveyed in the Tasmanian government's submission to the Human Rights Commission's inquiry. *Bringing Them Home* reported some, but not all, of the public service findings. The complete content of the submission told a very depressing story. It made it clear that Cape Barren Island housed a community where both adults and children lived such deprived lives that few people would disagree they would have been far better off on the Tasmanian mainland than in their isolated remote community.

In 1944, one inquiry noted the health of the islanders was deteriorating rapidly, since they would not adopt agriculture and relied upon outside sources, principally the Tasmanian government and Anglican Church, to provide supplies of food, fuel and clothing. By then, the island's part-Aboriginal population had fallen to 106. Nothing improved in the following decade. By 1957, the children of the islanders were 'under-nourished and starving'. There was no milk suitable for babies at the local store. Problems accumulated because of delayed boats, the way the store operated, and the misuse of funds on

[23] *Bringing Them Home*, p 31
[24] *Bringing Them Home*, p 95
[25] *Bringing Them Home*, p 94

alcohol.[26] The Tasmanian Health department undertook investigations on the island in 1956 and 1960 into the children's lack of motivation and unsatisfactory progress at school. It found their poor performance was linked to nutritional deficiencies. As a result, the Health Department, the Education Department and the charity Save the Children Fund provided children with food supplements of peanuts, powdered milk, cheese and oranges.[27] Nonetheless, the government continued to prop up the islanders' lifestyle. This was in the face of the expressed opinion of the leading political figure of the day, Premier Robert Cosgrove, who said:

> I feel that segregation in such a remote area is a major factor in preventing these unfortunate persons from leading normal lives and feel the only solution to the problem is their systematic removal and absorption into the Tasmanian community.[28]

However, Cosgrove's public servants advised him that, given time, the islanders would make the right decision themselves. In 1959, the Tasmanian Department of Social Services conducted a survey that attributed most of the problems of the community to their isolation and lack of opportunity: 'the life to which they are exposed encourages the more negative aspects of their character.' Nonetheless, the department's investigator, B. C. Hill, advised that 'to attempt to speed up what seems to be the inevitable assimilation of the island people into the Tasmanian population would ... be an unwarranted interference in their rights as citizens'. He perceived that 'a natural form of assimilation has been steadily taking place over the years without any conscious effort by the Government to hasten the trend'.

In 1961, the Director of Social Welfare commissioned yet another report from a child welfare officer. The officer visited the homes of the islanders and discussed relocation to the Tasmanian mainland. Of the homes visited, 'six do not want to leave and four will leave under certain circumstances'. His report observed that 'for the process for assimilation to be given a reasonable chance of success it seems essential that these families be properly housed'. He recommended that the government provide them with welfare housing. He eventually dis-

[26] Chief Secretary's Correspondence files, cited by *Tasmanian Government Submission to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Inquiry*, p A–26

[27] A. Morgan, Aboriginal Education in the Furneaux Islands (1798–1986), unpublished MEd thesis, 1985, cited by *Tasmanian Government Submission to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Inquiry*, p A26

[28] Correspondence from Premier to Director of Department of Social Welfare, 1957, quoted in *Tasmanian Government Submission to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Inquiry*, p A–26

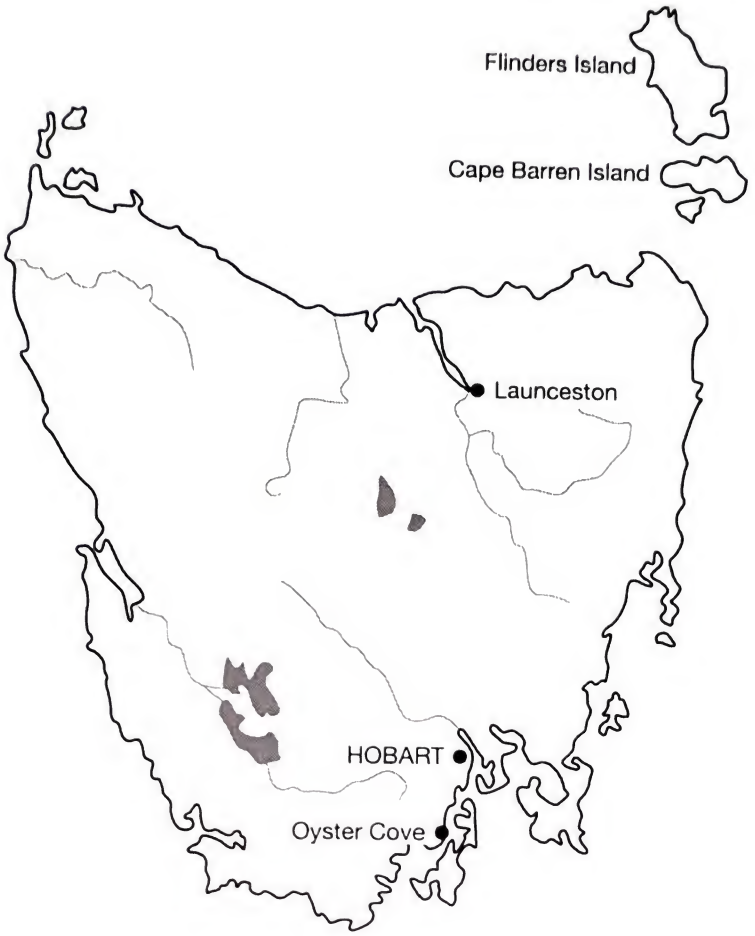
covered the final stumbling block. Most adults received Commonwealth unemployment benefits. Parents were reluctant to encourage their children to leave the island because 'it would have reduced the income of the household if the children left to work on the mainland, rather than staying on the island and receiving unemployment benefits'.[29]

In 1966, some members of the Church of England, which had provided the island's first school in 1890, advanced a proposal to provide better education for its pupils. The one-teacher school taught only a primary school curriculum. If the child of an islander wanted to go on to high school, one option was the nearby Flinders Island Area School, which offered a handful of secondary education subjects. But the most preferred way was by becoming a boarder on the Tasmanian mainland and undertaking the full secondary education curriculum.[30] Some islander children had been taking that option since early in the twentieth century. Parents often accompanied them, drawn by the better educational and employment prospects around Launceston, especially after the post-war economic expansion. In 1964, the government decreed entry to secondary education in Tasmania was now compulsory. In the absence of any prospect that Cape Barren Island would get its own high school, in 1966 the Anglican Church in Life Movement approached the state Minister for Education. It argued the island's one-room, one-teacher primary school be closed and replaced by correspondence lessons for young children plus a special bursary system for older children to allow them accommodation in hostels on the Tasmanian mainland. However, resistance from islander parents, who won the support of the state's Chief Secretary, determined the issue. The government decided the existing school should remain open. Correspondence schooling was no substitute for a live classroom, the Chief Secretary said, and the islanders 'should not in any way feel coerced [to leave], nor should there be any suggestion of enforced separation from their children through the pressure of educational needs'.[31] All this occurred, it should be noted, well before the emergence of the modern revival of radical Aboriginal politics.

[29] Report from Child Welfare Officer to Director of Social Welfare, 1961, quoted in *Tasmanian Government Submission to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Inquiry*, p A–29

[30] *Tasmanian Government Submission to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Inquiry*, p A–32

[31] Chief Secretary to Minister for Education, 9 December 1966, quoted in *Tasmanian Government Submission to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Inquiry*, p A–37



Tasmania, locations of places mentioned in text.

By 1969 there were only 60 Cape Barren Islanders still living on the island itself — 31 adults and 29 children.[32] The high proportion of remaining children was, on its own, quite sufficient to question *Bringing Them Home*'s claim that the process of assimilation was engineered through the removal of children. Moreover, the report declined to explain why, if the government was bent on assimilation, it allowed this process to occur so slowly while it continued to prop up the islanders' lifestyle by providing them with education, health services and social welfare benefits. While many in the government hoped the islanders would decide of their own volition to leave their remote, poorly serviced location for a patently better life on the Tasmanian mainland, no one wanted to move them by coercion. Despite everything, they respected their rights as citizens. This is not the picture of authorities driven by racist ambition to rid the island of its children. In short, from any rational perspective, there is enough evi-

[32] *Tasmanian Government Submission to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Inquiry*, p A–46

dence in the Tasmanian Government's own 1996 submission to disprove the existence of the Stolen Generations in Tasmania.

THE NUMBER OF TASMANIAN CHILD REMOVALS

There was yet another deceit that the *Bringing Them Home* report perpetrated in its discussion about Tasmania. Nowhere did it give any indication of the number of Aboriginal children removed from their families. This was also strange, since some of that very information was available to it, again in the submission from the Tasmanian government. While the submission provided no figures before the 1960s, it gave them for five of the years from 1969 to 1995 inclusive. Four of these years were in the period when *Bringing Them Home* described the use of non-indigenous foster homes in Australia as 'arguably genocidal'. Tables 11.1 and 11.2 summarize the data provided by the submission. Table 11.2 shows that by far the preferred location of placement of part-Aboriginal children was in foster homes.

TABLE 11.1: ABORIGINAL WARDS, TASMANIA: REASONS FOR ADMISSION AND AVERAGE AGE AT ADMISSION, 1969–1995

Reason for admission	*1969*	*1975*	*1983*	*1989*	*1995*
Neglect	11	17	19		17
Youth justice		2	4		1
Beyond control		2	2		5
Child protection					6
Voluntary	1	4	1	3	6
Unknown	8		9	39	
Total wards	20	25	35	42	35
Average age at admission	5.3	Unknown	6	6.7	8.6

Source: *Tasmanian Government Submission to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children*, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Hobart, 13 August 1996, p A–71, Table 2.

Note: These figures reflect wards of the state in the year specified, by reason for admission, not new admissions for that year. After 1969, each of the selected years includes some children counted in the previous cohort, depending on age at admission and age at discharge [this note accompanied the submission's own Table 2, p A–71].

TABLE 11.2: ABORIGINAL WARDS, TASMANIA: PLACEMENTS AND PROPORTIONS OF ABORIGINAL WARDS, 1969–1995

Reason for admission	*1969*	*1975*	*1983*	*1989*	*1995*
Parents			6	3	3
Relatives			1		1
Foster Home	12	17	8	3	11
Group Home		1	2	1	1
Children's Home*		5	7		10
Independent					8
Institution**		2	1		1
Unknown	8		10	35	
Total wards	20	25	35	42	35
Aboriginal wards as a proportion of all wards	2.4 %	2.7 %	6.4 %	10.9 %	9.5 %

Source: *Tasmanian Government Submission to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children*, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Hobart, 13 August 1996, pp A–71–5, Tables 23–7.
Note: No figure was provided for Aboriginal wards as per cent of all wards in 1989. The figure listed here for that year was for the closest available year, 1991.
* Also known as Approved Children's Home.
** Also known as Department Home.

At the 1971 census only 671 Tasmanians identified as Aborigines, so the twenty wards in 1969 represented 3 per cent of the known population. This was much less than the 'one in three' or the 'one in ten' claimed by *Bringing Them Home* for the rest of Australia, but was still an unreliable guide to the true proportion of Aboriginal children in care. It is now widely accepted that before the 1970s, the number of people of Tasmanian Aboriginal descent was seriously underestimated. In the 1976 census, the total Tasmanian Aboriginal population suddenly shot up to 2942 people. This was much higher than any possible natural increase and was clearly the result of the impact of the Aboriginal politics of the time, which made it more acceptable to identify oneself as someone of Aboriginal descent. By 1975, the government's figures showed the number of Aboriginal wards was 25. Hence these 25 wards represented just 0.8 per cent of the Aboriginal

population of the time.[33] This made it fanciful for anyone to seriously argue that Tasmanian child removal policies in this period were intended to eliminate Aboriginality.

It also revealed why *Bringing Them Home* declined to put a figure on the total number of removals. The numbers were so small they made the claim that there was something resembling the Stolen Generations in Tasmania, let alone a government campaign to eradicate Aboriginality, look absurd. So, once again, the Human Rights Commission got out its airbrush.

THE ABSURDITY OF COMPENSATION IN TASMANIA

As Tasmanian Premier Paul Lennon said in 2008, the $58,000 individual payments to his state's stolen children were not much for a lifetime of 'cultural isolation'. His choice of phrase made it clear that he was endorsing the full-blown Stolen Generations thesis of Peter Read: Aboriginal children were removed from their parents with the aim of preventing them from inheriting Aboriginal culture. Yet in Tasmania this could not possibly be true for at least four reasons: (i) there was no existent Aboriginal culture from which to be disinherited; (ii) the Tasmanian authorities did not believe the children they removed were Aborigines; (iii) many children removed from Cape Barren Island were fostered with other Cape Barren Islander families on the Tasmanian mainland; and (iv) only a small proportion of Tasmanian Aboriginal children were removed, demonstrating no serious program to destroy Aboriginality ever existed.

At the time of writing, only four of the 84 Tasmanians recipients of compensation had been publicly identified. The four participated in government media announcements of the compensation package. However, when each of them discussed their background in interviews, they provided information that only went to further question the existence of the Stolen Generations in Tasmania. The personal biographies they gave to journalists included the following information:

> [Annette Peardon]: The story that we've learned and from some files, the charge was neglect for most mothers that lost their children, or the children were actually taken from them, and the charge was neglect. I myself was removed from Flinders Island with my brother and my mother, who's

[33] By 1995, the 35 Aboriginal wards were drawn from a population that had grown, remarkably, to 14,800, according to the 1996 census. So the wards now represented just 0.2 per cent of all Tasmanians who self-identified as Aborigines.

now deceased, was actually in prison for three months hard labour for neglect of children.[34]

[Debra Anne Hocking]: I was born in South-East Tasmania in a family of five children and the welfare authorities removed myself and my other siblings when I was eighteen months of age and you have to understand that this isn't recalled history, this is stuff that I've read from my government file, a lot of it, particularly in the early years. So we were removed on the grounds of neglect, and neglect back in those days could mean anything, it could mean that, you know, perhaps there wasn't enough food in the cupboard and so you were being neglected, or perhaps, you know, the kids haven't got shoes on so they've been neglected, and it was very dodgy, very dodgy guidelines on, you know, neglect ... Over the years all my mother's children, my five brothers and sisters were removed from her care. Over a period of two years all but one of the children were returned. Sadly I was not returned but instead remained in state care for reasons I have yet to understand.[35]

Eddie Thomas, 70, believed to be the oldest surviving member of the stolen generations in Tasmania, was taken from his grandmother when he was six months old. He and his brother and sister had been placed in her care when his mother died of septicaemia after his birth on Cape Barren Island in 1936. He believed his grandmother was duped into signing a consent form. 'She couldn't read or write, so she couldn't have been in agreement,' he said. His life with white foster families on mainland Tasmania was unhappy and his grandmother was prevented from visiting the children, he said.[36]

Heather Brown, 63, broke down as she recalled the day she and six other children were taken from her family home ... She still does not know why she was taken from her parents at Wiltshire Junction, northwest Tasmania, or why she was not allowed to see them or her siblings while she grew up in a succession of foster families.[37]

Although each of these four people had seen their social welfare files, none of them could quote any extract saying welfare or police officers acted simply because the children were Aborigines, or half-castes, or Cape Barren Islanders. As they said, two of them were ostensibly removed because of parental neglect, one did not know why she was

[34] Annette Peardon, interview, *Background Briefing*, ABC Radio, 11 February 1996

[35] Debra Anne Hocking, interview, *Australia Talks*, ABC Radio, 29 January 2008; and 'Standing in Solidarity With the Stolen Generations', *News From the Field*, Catholic Agency for International Aid and Development, 4 December 2006

[36] Matthew Denholm, 'First Payout Deal for Stolen Children', *Australian*, 18 October 2006

[37] Matthew Denholm, 'First Payout Deal for Stolen Children', *Australian*, 18 October 2006

removed, and the grandmother of the fourth apparently consented to his removal to a foster home six months after his mother died in childbirth. In short, none of the four provided any evidence they were removed 'simply on the basis of race', as Premier Lennon claimed. If these were the best cases Lennon could find to nominate for media interviews, there was a void at the centre of his rationale.

In fact, the reasons given on the welfare files raise a very different possibility. If ending the Tasmanian Aboriginal or half-caste 'race' really had been the policy of the governments and the courts of the time, why would the officials involved in these four quite different child removal cases go to so much trouble to cover their actions with bogus file entries? Why didn't they simply record the underlying reasons on which they allegedly acted and the policies that sanctioned them? Why, in subsequent years when this issue gained so much publicity, have none of them regretted their actions and publicly come clean? It doesn't make sense. In Debra Hocking's case, her four siblings were returned to their mother yet, according to the theory of the Stolen Generations, the whole idea was that the children would never return. As Lennon said, they were meant to endure 'a lifetime of cultural isolation'. So that doesn't make sense either. Indeed, the only rational conclusion is that the reasons given on the files probably told the truth. The children really were neglected; the grandmother really did request the baby be placed in foster care.

THE DEFAMATION OF HAROLD BLAIR

Probably the most loathsome example of all the cases of child removal described in the Human Rights Commission's inquiry into the Stolen Generations was said to have occurred in Victoria in the 1960s. Welfare authorities offered Aboriginal parents in outback Queensland the opportunity to send their children to free holidays by the sea in Victoria. The offer, however, had a hidden agenda. When the children got to the holiday homes, they were adopted out to white families and never saw their parents again. The Human Rights Commission's principal source for this claim was Professor Colin Tatz, who gave the following testimony:

> The 'Harold Blair Holiday Schemes', which was basically run by Mr Killoran in Brisbane through the Queensland Aboriginal Affairs Department, would organize holiday homes over the Christmas holidays in Melbourne [for Queensland children]. After three weeks ... the couple would say, 'I'd love to keep little Mary for a little longer'. 'Sure you can keep Mary for a little longer.' No reference to the parents. Within a few months the next question, 'Could I adopt Mary?' 'Yeah, you can adopt Mary.' This was not an AWB [Aborigines Welfare Board] Victorian adoption. It was

done through the Queensland Native Affairs Department, direct adoption kind of by mail order and by phone call.[38]

Harold Blair died in 1976 and so was unable to publicly defend himself against Tatz's accusations about his holiday program. Let me do so now. It is beyond rational belief that Blair, one of the most impressive figures ever in Aboriginal affairs, would have approved a scheme that had objectives of this kind.

Blair was perhaps the best-known Aboriginal person of the 1940s and 1950s. He was a singer whose lyric tenor voice made him famous as a recording artist and concert performer. His life story of a rise from obscurity to celebrity also had strong appeal to many Australian newspaper and magazine readers of the day who followed his career assiduously. He was born to an unmarried teenage mother on Cherbourg Mission in western Queensland and from the age of two grew up on Purga Mission near Ipswich. He became suddenly famous in 1945 when he scored a record vote in the national radio talent quest *Australia's Amateur Hour*. He then had to overcome several formal barriers that educational authorities put in the way of him gaining further musical training. Eventually, however, he made an international career for himself as a concert singer in the United States and Europe. When he returned to Australia he lived in Melbourne and, while continuing his singing career, became an Aboriginal activist, joining the Aborigines Advancement League and the Federal Council of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. In 1957, when the Victorian government established its Aboriginal Welfare Board, it appointed Blair one of two Aboriginal representatives. He served as a director for the next three years. In the 1964 Victorian state elections, he stood for the Australian Labor Party in a campaign he ran partly on Aboriginal issues: the poor state of their welfare, housing, health and education. He came first in the poll but was defeated when the preferences of the Democratic Labor Party went to the Liberals. He nonetheless put Aboriginal people onto the political agenda at a time when their plight otherwise attracted little public attention. Four months before his death in May 1976 he was awarded the Order of Australia for services to music and the welfare of Aboriginal people.[39]

[38] Professor Colin Tatz, evidence 260, quoted in *Bringing Them Home*, p 10 (ellipsis and content in square brackets in original). 'Mr Killoran' was Patrick Killoran, Director of the Queensland Department of Aboriginal and Islander Affairs.

[39] Kenneth Harrison, *Dark Man, White World: A Portrait of Tenor Harold Blair*, Novalit, Melbourne, 1975; Alan Duncan, 'Harold Blair (1924–1976)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 13*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1993, pp 193–4. For an earlier critique of *Bringing Them Home*'s

It was no secret that as a young man Blair was a radical left-winger. While working as a cane cutter, he was discovered by the Queensland trade union activist and Communist, Harry Green, who acted as promoter and manager of his early singing career. When Blair moved to Melbourne in the late 1940s, other Communists, especially the arts patrons John Lloyd and his wife Gwenda, fulfilled a similar role. They tried to make him an Australian version of the American Negro concert singer, Paul Robeson, a supporter of the Soviet Union who helped radicalize black politics during the Cold War. By the late 1950s, however, Blair was taken up by the Moral Rearmament movement under its program to convert well-known Aborigines to the anti-communist cause. This was virtually a replica of the conversion by Moral Rearmament of the former Communist author Margaret Tucker, described in Chapter Six.[40]

Blair conceived the idea for his holiday scheme after a team of marching girls from Cherbourg Mission performed at Melbourne's Moomba Festival in 1962. They were a great favourite with festival crowds and the girls enjoyed their visit to Melbourne so much that Blair decided to capitalize on the goodwill by expanding the program. Blair's drive and enthusiasm won government support in Queensland and Victoria and found many prospective Melbourne families willing to billet children from the outback. The white families chosen to participate had to have children of their own of the same age and sex as their Aboriginal guests. The demand was so great from Queensland Aboriginal parents and children that organizers had to charter planes to transport them all from Brisbane to Melbourne. The project expanded to New South Wales and one of its offshoots, the Miss Junior Victoria quest, raised money for many Aboriginal projects of the day, including the Institute for Aboriginal Development at Alice Springs. It eventually arranged holidays for no fewer than 3000 Aboriginal children.[41]

The notion that Blair would have devoted his talent and energy to this scheme in order for Aboriginal children to be stolen from their parents is so inherently implausible that the allegation should never have been made without some very convincing evidence. *Bringing Them Home* failed to provide any. It reproduced Tatz's uncorrobo-

defamation of Harold Blair, see Douglas Meagher, 'Not Guilty', *Quadrant*, November, 2000

[40] Harrison, *Dark Man, White World*, pp 54–89, 188–206. Harrison was another Moral Rearmament member who fulfilled a similar political role in writing Blair's biography as Jean Hughes did in rewriting Margaret Tucker's 'autobiography'.

[41] Harrison, *Dark Man, White World*, pp 227–45; Duncan, 'Harold Blair', p 194

rated assertion prominently — on page 10 of the 689 report — without any scepticism about his ability to give an objective account, even though Tatz had a track record among the most fixated of all the Australian academics in genocide studies.[42] The only other support the report offered for its case[43] was one confidential submission from one unnamed woman who claimed she became a stolen child through the program. She said her mother died while she was spending the holiday with a Victorian family and they retained her, despite the fact her father was still alive. I will quote in full the sole empirical evidence *Bringing Them Home* used to demonize a once popular project that lasted for the best part of a decade, and involved 3000 Aboriginal children and almost as many white families.

> Well, I was fostered when I was 7. I was staying with my foster parents and they rang up one day and said my mother had died and would they consider fostering me. That was over the phone. I know there was nothing signed for me and that, and I want to know why because my father was still alive, and he didn't die until I was 10. [I was with these people] through the 'Harold Blair' scheme for Christmas holidays and when I come down me and my two sisters got split up. We used to live in Coomealla on the mission, across the border from Mildura. They just rang me up and said that my father had died, that's all ... *Confidential evidence 214, Victoria: woman removed at 7 years in the late 1960s having come to Melbourne for a holiday. She never saw her parents again.*[44]

Even though this woman's version of events may have been true, it was not enough on its own to establish that such incidents were common under the Harold Blair project. One personal anecdote was hardly sufficient to condemn a whole program involving several thousand people. The Human Rights Commission should have

[42] Colin Tatz, *Genocide in Australia*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1999; 'Genocide in Australia', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 1, 3, 1999; 'Confronting Aboriginal Genocide', *Aboriginal History*, 25, 2001; *With Intent to Destroy: Reflecting on Genocide*, Verso, London, 2003

[43] More recently, the historian Richard Broome has alleged that the Victorian Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Ray Meagher, said in 1968: 'It has come to my attention that some people are getting aboriginal children through holiday schemes and not sending them back' (*Aboriginal Victorians: A History From 1800*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2005, p 343). Broome said this was reported in the Melbourne *Herald* newspaper on 25 June 1968. That is untrue. The *Herald* discussed the issue of informal adoptions in that edition but none of its quotations from Ray Meagher made any mention of 'holiday schemes' or anything resembling them. Nor did the other two Melbourne newspapers which reported the issue of informal adoptions at the same, *The Age* and the *Sun*, quote Meagher saying this.

[44] *Bringing Them Home*, p 66 (content in square brackets and ellipsis in original)

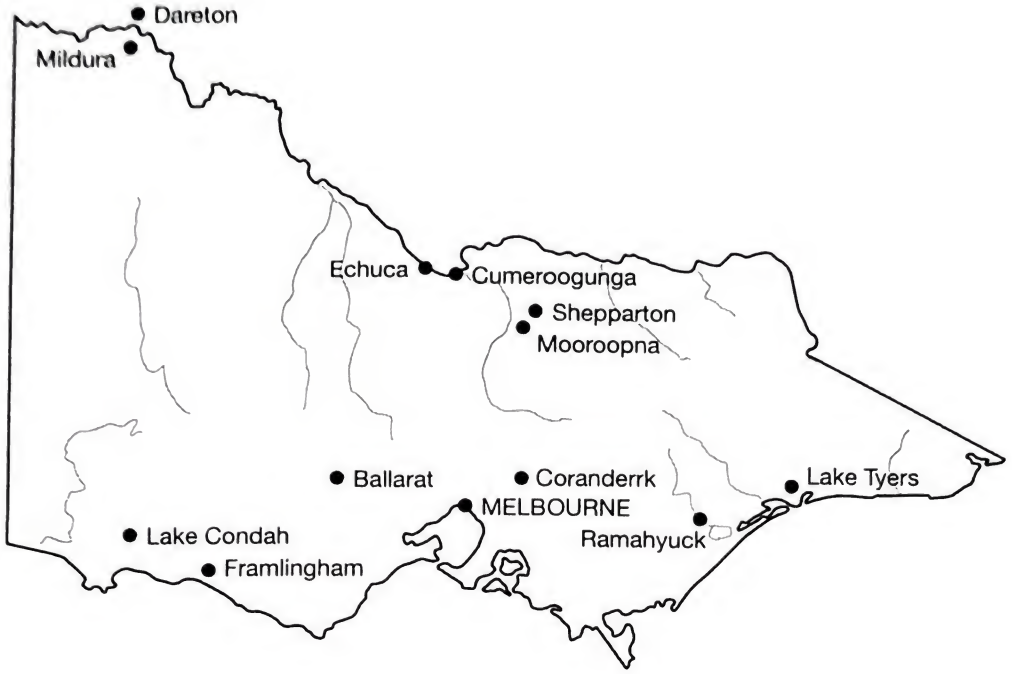
investigated the relevant records of the two major agencies that funded and supervised the program, the Queensland and Victorian Departments of Aboriginal Affairs. It declined to do so. A proper case would have provided information about how many children went on the holidays but failed to return. It would have told how many Aboriginal parents complained about this. The families concerned were not unknown. All the children were recruited from Queensland and New South Wales mission stations where they were well-known to mission managers. Yet the commission failed to provide evidence of any parents reporting their children had gone missing over the holidays.[45] The complete absence of such complaints is telling.

At the very least, the authors of *Bringing Them Home* should have examined the background of their anonymous informant to see if what she said was credible. If she had grown up on the Coomealla Mission at Dareton, the New South Wales Aborigines Welfare Board would have kept records of her and her family. When her mother died, the board would have known whether her father and his whereabouts were known, whether she had other Aboriginal relatives who could have cared for her, or whether she was alone in the world. It could also have told the inquiry whether she was fostered out or adopted with the board's approval and if her retention by the white family was lawful. In Victoria at the time, it was illegal for foster parents to refuse a request by the natural parents for the return of any child, black or white.[46] If her father had wanted custody, under normal circumstances he should have got it.

The Human Rights Commission not only failed to make elementary inquiries of this kind, it failed to provide *any* substantial evidence for its serious accusations against the Harold Blair project. The commission was so impatient to censure Blair — how dare he try to ameliorate race relations by letting Aboriginal children enjoy a holiday in the city, which they might prefer to their 'own country' — it neglected to establish a case of improper conduct at all. Nonetheless Blair still stands publicly condemned in *Bringing Them Home* for creating a program that separated children from their parents with false promises and lies. He is one Aborigine who genuinely deserves an apology.

[45] In 1968, when he raised the issue of informal adoptions in Victorian, the Director of Aboriginal Affairs, Reginald Worthy, could only point to three cases where unofficial foster parents had initially refused parents' requests to return their children. In all three cases, the children were returned without the need for police action, 'Aboriginal Adoptions: Interstate Control Bid', *The Age*, 26 June 1968, p 3

[46] Statement by Reginald Worthy, Director of Aboriginal Affairs, *The Age*, 26 June 1968, p 3



Victoria 1920–1960, Aboriginal settlements and other places mentioned in text.

VICTORIA'S EMBARRASSING LACK OF STOLEN GENERATIONS

> In Victoria unlike other States such as New South Wales there was no formal policy for removing children. It is therefore more difficult to trace how separations were occurring.
>
> — Victorian Stolen Generations Taskforce, *Report to Victorian Government*, April 2003 [47]

> In developing the Government's Final Submission, consideration was given to the important question of the total number of Aboriginal people affected by separation or removal in Victoria. Unfortunately the Victorian Government is not in a position to give an estimate of these numbers.
>
> — Victorian Government, *Final Submission to National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*, August 1996 [48]

It is virtually impossible to establish a case supported by credible evidence that the state of Victoria created anything resembling the Stolen Generations. As the above quotations demonstrate, that has been

[47] Victorian Stolen Generations Taskforce, *Report to Victorian Government*, Department for Victorian Communities, April 2003, p 73

[48] Victorian Government, *Final Submission to National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*, August 1996, Part 2, Appendix 16, p 1

acknowledged by government reports that went looking for the phenomenon but came up empty-handed. Between 1996 and 2003, the Victorian government produced or commissioned six separate submissions and reports on the subject:

- Victorian Government, *Interim Submission to the National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children From Their Families*, January 1996
- Victorian Government, *Final Submission to the National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children From Their Families*, Parts I and II, August 1996
- Victorian Government, *Response to the Report of the National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children From Their Families, Bringing Them Home*, November 1997
- Victorian Government, *Response to Bringing Them Home: Implementation Status Report,* November 1998
- *The Victorian Government Response to Bringing Them Home 2002,* October 2002
- Victorian Stolen Generations Taskforce, *Report to Victorian Government*, April 2003.

All these reports presumed from the outset that Victoria had Stolen Generations of its own, even though none was able to provide evidence of either government policies or a body of people who legitimately filled the bill. However, none of this prevented the Victorian parliament from passing the following motion in September 1997:

> That this House apologizes to the Aboriginal people on behalf of all Victorians for the past policies under which Aboriginal children were removed from their families and expresses deep regret at the hurt and distress this has caused and reaffirms its support for reconciliation between all Australians.

The motion was put to the House by Jeff Kennett the Premier of Victoria and leader of the Liberal/National coalition government. It passed without dissent. This was strange, given that less than a year earlier its own submission to the Human Rights Commission inquiry made it clear that, from the late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, very few Aboriginal children had been removed as a result of government legislation or policies. Moreover, after the passing of the 1957 Victorian Aborigines Act, the Aborigines Welfare Board did not have the authority to remove children at all. Even *Bringing Them Home* acknowledged this: 'for the first time in Victoria's Aboriginal affairs legislation, the Board was given no specific

power in relation to Aboriginal children.'[49] The Victorian government has produced a huge amount of literature on the subject, including two submissions to the Humans Rights Commission inquiry and four separate reports after that inquiry, yet has failed to find much more than some private fostering and informal adoptions that had no government sanction. In other words, there was nothing for the Victorian government to apologize for. Yet the government *wanted* so badly to have Stolen Generations of its own, it ignored the findings of its research and apologized anyway, just like they did in Tasmania.

To underline how irrational the Victorian apology was, let me provide a short account of the relevant policies and their outcomes from the 1880s to the 1970s. The information here has been summarized from the Victorian government's own 1996 submission to the Human Rights Commission's inquiry.

Apprenticeships: In the late nineteenth century the Board for the Protection of Aborigines in Victoria had similar objectives as the Aborigines Protection Board in New South Wales. Board members wanted young Aborigines to be able to take their place in the modern world and the modern economy and sought to help them get the training to do so. They wanted youths living on Aboriginal stations to go into apprenticeships with employers. The Aborigines Protection Act of 1886 gave them the statutory power to do this. The girls were to be trained for domestic service, as in New South Wales, but boys were offered a variety of occupations, including jobs with the Post and Telegraph Service. The apprenticeship system continued until 1929, but only ever involved small numbers. The board's reports from 1912 to 1925 and the Victorian Year Books from 1921–22 to 1933–34 provided incomplete information on the number of young people involved. These reports indicated that only three or four children were 'in service' each year, until the scheme apparently lapsed in 1929.[50]

Schools and Dormitories: The Aborigine Act 1890 consolidated previous legislation and gave the board control over the education of all Aboriginal children. Attendance at school was compulsory for both black and white children. On Aboriginal stations, Regulation 15 made every male under fourteen years of age and every female under eighteen subject to the dormitory system. They had to reside, take their meals and sleep in a dormitory if required to do so by the station

[49] *Bringing Them Home*, p 62

[50] Victorian Government, *Final Submission to National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children*, August 1996, Part 1, pp 42–3

manager. The regulation operated only four years and became redundant when dormitories on stations began to close from 1894 onwards because of the reduction of station populations.[51]

Industrial Schools and Orphanages: The Aborigines Protection Act of 1886 allowed the board to pursue a program of boarding out children of mixed descent in urban areas so they could attend industrial schools. The program affected very few children. Between 1901 and 1952 the numbers were published in the Victorian Year Book. Although there was a gap between 1905 and 1922, it placed an average of only five children a year. The scheme lapsed in 1952.[52]

Care and Protection Processes: Under regulations of 1890, the board was able to send children deemed by a court hearing to be neglected to the care of the Department of Neglected Children, later the Children's Welfare Department. Boys could be sent to the Salvation Army farm for wayward boys at Bayswater, and girls to one of several homes to be trained for domestic service. However, the government's research could not find any cases from the 1890s to the end of the 1920s where this actually happened. It concluded: 'It is believed that there were few, if any, "care and protection" cases during this period, where Aboriginal children were committed directly through the Children's Court to the care of the Department of Neglected Children.'[53] The only examples of Aboriginal children found being subject to these laws and regulations occurred in the 1950s when police initiated 'care and protection' action against 150 Aboriginal children from shanty towns in the Gippsland district, Western District and the Goulburn Valley. At Mooroopna near Shepparton, police removed 24 children from families living on the shire garbage tip. Children's courts placed them in the care of the Children's Welfare Department, which sent most on to the Ballarat Orphanage where anthropologist Diane Barwick found them in 1956 and 1957 and wrote about their plight.[54]

[51] Victorian Government, *Final Submission to National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children*, Part 1, p 43

[52] Victorian Government, *Final Submission to National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children*, Part 1, pp 43–4

[53] Victorian Government, *Final Submission to National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children*, Part 1, pp 16, 42, 44

[54] Victorian Government, *Final Submission to National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children*, Part 1, pp 51–2, 55. The observations by Diane Barwick were quoted from her PhD thesis, A Little More than Kin, Australian National University, 1963, pp 294–5. Needless to say, *Bringing Them Home* made as much mileage as possible from this sole Victorian example of its thesis, pp 62–3.

Young Offenders: The desperation of the authors of the government's submission to find stolen children in any numbers was demonstrated by its inclusion of young offenders in is listing of children removed from their parents. It estimated 400 Aboriginal children were separated because they were young offenders. Including them in such a list was ridiculous since they had obviously broken the same laws as white youths and, as the submission reluctantly admitted, 'they were generally able to return to their communities within a few months although this was certainly not always the case'.[55]

Legal Adoption: Adoption became legal in Victoria in 1928. However, the government submission failed to turn up any examples of Aboriginal children subject to the process. 'No records have been located, however, it is possible that there were a small number of legal adoptions arranged through hospitals.'[56]

The Lake Tyers Settlement: From 1924 to 1957, the only institution staffed and funded by the Protection Board was the settlement at Lake Tyers. It provided for indigent Aborigines who inhabited a strictly regulated regime but who remained there voluntarily. Its population ranged from about 250 in the 1920s to fewer than 200 persons when it closed in 1957. In 1928 the Aborigines Act excluded from its provisions all but full-blood Aborigines. Although the settlement still accommodated people of part descent at Lake Tyers, subsequent changes to state definitions of what constituted Aboriginality meant the board declined to accept responsibility for people of Aboriginal descent who chose not to live at the settlement.[57]

Government Indifference: When the chairman of the Board for the Protection of Aborigines attended the 1937 Commonwealth–State Aboriginal administrators' conference, he said he was there primarily as an observer since 'the problems relating to Aborigines are not acute in Victoria'. The board declined to attend the 1948 and 1951 Commonwealth–State conferences on the grounds that its numbers of Aborigines were too small to warrant it. In the years from 1950 to 1955 the board met just five times, and not at all in 1953 and 1954.[58]

[55] Victorian Government, *Final Submission to National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children*, Part 1, p 18
[56] Victorian Government, *Final Submission to National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children*, Part 1, p 52
[57] Victorian Government, *Final Submission to National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children*, Part 1, pp 46–8
[58] Victorian Government, *Final Submission to National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children*, Part 1, pp 48–9

The Aborigines Welfare Board: After a review of policy, the Victorian government introduced the Aborigines Act of 1957. It established a new Aborigines Welfare Board with ten members, two of them Aboriginal people. However, the new Act gave the board no authority over Aboriginal children. In fact, the Act did not even mention children. Apart from the provision of welfare housing, the board was left with little responsibility. Most other services for Aborigines were consigned to mainstream government departments: education to the Education Department, health to the Health department, child welfare to the Social Welfare Department. The Aborigines Welfare Board could give advice on these policies and found a way to provide funds for books and uniforms for some Aboriginal children at secondary schools, but it had no powers to enforce any of its ideas in these fields.[59]

The *Bringing Them Home* report acknowledged that the 1957 Act formally ended any authority the board and its predecessors had to remove Aboriginal children: '... for the first time in Victoria's Aboriginal affairs legislation, the board was given no specific power in relation to Aboriginal children.' However, it pretended to its readers that this made little difference to the outcome: 'Although the Aborigines Welfare Board had no power to remove children, it could notify the police that it was concerned about a particular child and thereby initiate forcible removal action.'[60] The report declined to tell readers that any Aboriginal child removal at the time was subject to the Child Welfare Act of 1954, a law that did not discriminate on grounds of race or ethnicity and which required police to go before a magistrate and prove their case, just as with white children. Nor did it provide any examples of what normally happened in this period. So let me give one now. It comes from Richard Broome's book, *Aboriginal Victorians: A History Since 1800*:

> In 1944 two children were removed from a couple who had a history of convictions for drunkenness and domestic violence. The crunch came when they were both drunk in public and police observed the father throw the children down the river bank. The children were crying and allegedly in danger of falling in. Their hut was said to be 'dirty' and there was only flour, jam and powdered milk on hand. A police constable said in court: 'I have known the accused about three years. I have frequently seen them on the streets of Shepparton in a drunken condition with their children. There have been convictions of both of them. In my opinion they are not fit and proper persons to have control of children. The chil-

[59] Victorian Government, *Final Submission to National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children*, Part 1, pp 57–9
[60] *Bringing Them Home*, p 62

dren have no boots and few clothes.' They were convicted of causing neglect, jailed, and their children were removed.[61]

Bringing Them Home also misled its readers about the intentions of the government in 1957. It alleged the government remained determined to enforce assimilation. Although the new Aborigines Act removed the Board's authority to remove children:

> Nevertheless, comments were made in debate on the Bill on the desirability of separating Aboriginal children from what were regarded as degenerate influences of their family. The best hope for these children was seen to lie in making them believe they were part of non-indigenous society.[62]

This was dissembling. As the barrister Douglas Meagher observed in a withering dissection of *Bringing Them Home*'s treatment of the debate on the Victorian legislation:

> So far as I can determine (and it is difficult because no source is supplied in the Wilson report), that may have referred to a speech by a Mr Feltham, a Country Party member in the Legislative Council, who was speaking not of government policy but of the activities of a committee of local citizens at the Mooroopna Settlement near Shepparton (*Hansard* vol. 252 p 1261). Or perhaps it was a reference to Mr Little, of the same house and a member of the Opposition, who spoke of removal of children from conditions of squalor and specifically disclaimed that it was on the ground of their parentage (*Hansard* vol. 252 p 1265). No member of the government spoke in such terms. Speeches by backbenchers, especially members of the Opposition, are not a basis for concluding government policy of the time.[63]

FORMAL AND INFORMAL ADOPTIONS IN VICTORIA

> Adoption wasn't one of the ... major functions [of the Aborigines Welfare Board] but the board was one of the 23 adoption agencies in Victoria at the time. If you really wanted a baby and you were struggling and couldn't get a baby through a normal adoption agency, you went to the Aborigines Welfare Board and you could get yourself a baby.
>
> — Colin Tatz, evidence to the Human Rights Commission's inquiry [64]

Adoption was another process *Bringing Them Home* declared complicit in creating the Stolen Generations in Victoria. But again the report engaged in a serious manipulation of the evidence. Its quotation from

[61] Broome, *Aboriginal Victorians*, p 266
[62] *Bringing Them Home*, p 62
[63] Meagher, 'Not Guilty', p 27. By 'Wilson Report', Meagher was referring to *Bringing Them Home*.
[64] quoted in *Bringing Them Home*, p 65 (ellipsis and square brackets in original)

Colin Tatz above made it appear it was very easy for anyone to adopt a baby from the Aboriginal Welfare Board. Tatz portrayed the board as the state's adoption agency of last resort. If you failed everywhere else, you could still walk into the board's office and 'get yourself a baby'.

The Human Rights Commission should never have published these comments. It already knew from the Victorian government's own submission that Tatz's picture was wildly inaccurate, but it chose not to say so.

It was true that the Aborigines Welfare Board did function as an adoption agency. It fulfilled that role from 1958 to 1968. After the Adoption Act of 1964 amended the process, the board became one of the state's twenty approved private adoption agencies. It was required to make regular reports to the Social Welfare Department about the children it placed. According to the Victorian government submission, the total number of legal adoptions it arranged between 1958 and 1968 was fifteen. Not fifteen babies a year, but fifteen babies over more than ten years — an average of 1.5 babies a year.[65] In other words, rather than a baby farm, the board was one adoption agency from which white applicants were almost certain to leave empty-handed. Hence, on this topic, *Bringing Them Home* committed two more offences against honest reporting. It paraded Tatz's worthless evidence as a reliable guide. And it withheld evidence that disproved what he said.

In fact, *Bringing Them Home*'s entire discussion of Victorian adoptions was patently unreliable. It made it appear that adoption was easy and that Aboriginal parents were easily duped:

> The Victorian adoption Act allowed anyone to arrange an adoption. The process involved the mother signing a consent form and thereafter losing all rights in relation to the child.[66]

It claimed Aborigines were often persuaded to sign the consent form to relinquish their children when all they had sought was temporary care. But the report also admitted, as an aside, that the process in Victoria actually involved putting the whole case before a judge to gain approval for the formal adoption order.[67] In other words, 'anyone' could not arrange an adoption unless it was sanctioned by a judge.

Most of the Aboriginal babies put up for adoption in Victoria had the same source as white babies in the same position. According to

[65] Victorian Government, *Final Submission to National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children*, Part 1, pp 62–3

[66] *Bringing Them Home*, p 64

[67] *Bringing Them Home*, pp 64–5

the Victorian government submission, in the 1950s and 1960s, they were born to unmarried teenage girls from interstate.[68] The submission did not elaborate but, at the time, the truth was that many girls in that condition, from all ethnic backgrounds, did the same. This was a time when contraception was unreliable and abortion illegal in all states. Before the pregnancy became visible, the girl left home for a 'holiday' in another state where she remained until the confinement. If she needed accommodation, there were several charities that established homes for girls in her position, and also acted as adoption agencies. The Salvation Army, in particular, had long been active in the field. After the birth and adoption, the girls returned home to resume their former lives, often with only their mothers knowing their secret. Today, pregnant teenagers from Queensland still go to Victoria and New South Wales for the same reason and under much the same conditions. Only now, in an age that imagines itself compassionate, instead of going to have their babies adopted, they go to have them aborted. *Bringing Them Home*'s attempt to exploit these little tragedies for girls of all backgrounds in order to shore up a narrative of Aboriginal victimhood was a sign of desperation.

The only place where there was credible evidence to support any serious accusation the Human Rights Commission made about the separation of children in Victoria was in the area of informal adoptions. *Bringing Them Home* reported that the Aboriginal Affairs Act of 1967 abolished the Aboriginal Welfare Board and transferred its role to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. The first annual report of the Ministry in 1968 attracted much attention when it expressed its concern about 'unauthorized fostering arrangements of Aboriginal children'.[69] About 300 Aboriginal children were found to have been separated from their parents through either unauthorized adoptions or informal foster care arrangements. The revelation became a minor public scandal in Victoria and attracted considerable press coverage, including news reports, feature articles, cartoons and editorials.[70] The story was broken by the newly appointed Director of Aboriginal Affairs, Reginald Worthy. He told a social work conference that officers in his department had found 300 Aboriginal children were not living with their natural parents, and were suspected of having been adopted 'unofficially'. Such arrangements were not illegal as long as money had not changed hands and the Aboriginal parents had

[68] Victorian Government, *Final Submission to National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children*, Part 1, p 62

[69] *Bringing Them Home*, p 66

[70] *Herald*, 25 June 1968, p 3; *Sun*, 25 June 1968, p 3, 26 June 1968, pp 3, 8; *The Age*, 26 June 1968, p 3

not asked for the children back. But Worthy had gone public to encourage Aboriginal parents to ask for their children to be returned.

> The idea of taking away from aboriginal women the responsibility of caring for their own children is unbelievably prevalent in Victoria. I intend to do all I can to stop it. But the only action my department can take is to encourage the natural parents to demand their children back. We will tell them that if the foster parents refuse then they should immediately contact the police.[71]

The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in the Liberal/National coalition government, Ray Meagher, publicly supported his departmental head. He said he was shocked that the total of informal adoptions was as high as 300.

> We knew some people were taking aboriginal children into their homes without going through a legal process. We have always opposed this and we have always discouraged it. With the extra staff under our new administrative set-up we are finding the practice much more extensive. I'm afraid it has become almost fashionable for a family to have an aboriginal child.

Meagher warned people thinking of adopting an Aboriginal child to seek advice first from his Ministry or the Social Welfare Department. 'The advice almost certainly will be discouraging,' he said.[72]

While the figure of 300 informal adoptions allowed the Human Rights Commission to at last have something tangible to back its claims about the extent of Aboriginal child separations in Victoria, this story did not actually support its central argument. The basic accusation of the Stolen Generations thesis was always that *governments*, either directly or indirectly, had forcibly removed Aboriginal children from their parents as young as possible in order to deny them their culture and eliminate their Aboriginality. Private adoptions and informal foster care arrangements were not part of that process. They were done without the approval or even the knowledge of the government. In the Victorian case, the government was the body that

[71] 'Native Baby "Bleached" — Department Chief's Claim', *Herald*, 25 June 1968, p 3

[72] 'See Me on Adoptions — Meagher', *Herald*, 25 June 1968, p 3. There is no good reason to doubt Worthy's assertion, even though there has never been any public verification of it. When the authors of the Victorian government submission to the Human Rights Commission inquiry went looking for such figures they could not find them in their records. They wrote: 'the wide range of situations in which Aboriginal children were separated or removed from their families include many informal, extended family based or "charitable" placements for which records are just not available' (Part 2, Appendix 16, p 1).

exposed and condemned the practice, and vowed to put an end to it. Rather than the cause of the problem, the government was the solution.

So when Jeff Kennett apologized in the Victorian parliament in 1997 for 'the past policies under which Aboriginal children were removed from their families' he was apologizing for the actions of his political predecessors who had condemned the one and only substantial case of Aboriginal child separation in the state's history. This was another apology that didn't make sense.

WE ARE ALL STOLEN GENERATIONS NOW

As well as apologizing in 1997, the Victorian government announced in June 2005 it would spend $5 million to create a community organization called Stolen Generations Victoria. The Stolen Generations Taskforce report of 2003, which recommended the establishment of the new organization, adopted the same strategy as the government in Tasmania. It changed the definition of what Stolen Generations meant. Instead of referring to children forcibly removed by government from parents as young as possible in order to deny them their culture and eliminate their Aboriginality, it adopted the following definition:

> the Taskforce has adopted the broad view and consider the term 'Stolen Generations' to mean any adult Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person separated at a young age from community, family, language, land or culture, as well as the families of that separated child.

The Taskforce also defined the groups who made up what it called the 'primary client base' of a Stolen Generations organization. They included:

- individuals who were removed as children
- family members who suffered as a result of their removal
- non-indigenous family members in adopted families, and
- descendants of those forcibly removed who, as a result, have been deprived of community ties, culture and language, and links with and entitlements to traditional land. [73]

In other words, to be one of the Stolen Generations you did not have to be separated forcibly, or illegitimately, or because you were of Aboriginal descent, or for any other racist reason. There was no specification of the length of the separation. There was no discussion about whether a child had to be separated from some or all of his

[73] Victorian Stolen Generations Taskforce, *Report to Victorian Government*, April 2003, pp 10–11

family or community. As long as you had some Aboriginal forebears and had been separated at some time for any reason, you qualified. And all your family qualified too, and so did all your descendants.

Hence Victoria, where the initial government research into its welfare history failed to find more than a handful of children removed under dubious circumstances, was transformed into a state where it was hard to find any people of Aboriginal descent who were *not* Stolen Generations.

CHAPTER TWELVE

The legal position in South Australia and Queensland

IF the Stolen Generations story were true, its members should have had many victories in the courts by now. Prime Minister Rudd said the total number of children affected was 50,000. The Human Rights Commission said it could be up to 100,000. The plight of these people has been known since 1981. The accusations involved serious breaches of Australian law — false imprisonment, misfeasance of public office, breach of duty of care, and breach of fiduciary and statutory duties. There has long been a line-up of human rights lawyers and Aboriginal legal aid services eager to take their cases. Yet, in all this time, only one claimant has been successful before a court.

Because of the great controversy over this issue, all those who claim to have been stolen from their parents have by now been able to access their personal records in government archives. Human rights lawyers have been requesting personal files on behalf of those who believe themselves to be members of the Stole Generations since at least 1997. Several states and the Commonwealth archives have set up special programs to make such access easy. Many people have now seen their personal files and know the reasons the authorities gave for removing them. Yet very few have gone to the courts seeking redress. This has not been because incentives were lacking. In South Australia, Bruce Trevorrow won an award of $525,000 plus $250,000 interest on the payment. While it is true that legal action is a daunting process and can take years to deliver a result, with such potential compensation at stake the effort would obviously be worth it for genuine cases.

Given the huge size of the potential client base, and the fact that Aboriginal people and their lawyers have had a grievance about the issue for more than 25 years, the lack of legal success is telling. On its own, it is enough to seriously question whether there ever were any Stolen Generations.

A handful of lawyers and legal academics have tried to explain this outcome. Some have blamed racism and ethnocentric hierarchy in the laws and legal system. In one academic law journal, Alisoun Neville drew her inspiration from the French postmodernist theorist Jean-François Lyotard's notion of 'the differend' to argue:

> The hierarchical nature of colonial law and its terms, including its underlying classificatory framework, are linked to studies of 'Whiteness', as the testimonies of Indigenous and non-Indigenous witnesses were assessed and located in *Cubillo* according to a 'hierarchy of credibility' that privileges white and/or official voices.[1]

In an analysis of Stolen Generations litigation, Chris Cuneen and Julia Grix of the Law School at the University of Sydney claimed:

> The cases presented here show that the legal processes have served to reconstruct and obscure the experiences of Aboriginal people. In *Williams*, *Cubillo* and *Kruger* Aboriginal protection and welfare laws are seen as benign in their intent. The reality of entrenched racial discrimination which these laws embodied has been obscured.[2]

If these claims were true then the same High Court of Australia that made the Mabo and Wik judgements, must have been shrouded in racism when it rejected the Stolen Generations test case of *Kruger v. Commonwealth; Bray v. Commonwealth*. That is hard to believe.

Others have accused judges of failing to recognize how disadvantaged the applicants were, and have criticized defence counsel for not being more supportive of reconciliation.[3] Some have argued that 'litigation is a poor forum for judging the big picture of history'.[4] In other words, there are lawyers and legal academics who would say

[1] Alisoun Neville, '*Cubillo v. Commonwealth*: Classifying Text and the Violence of Exclusion', *Macquarie Law Journal*, 5, 2005, p 31

[2] Chris Cuneen and Julia Grix, 'The Limitations of Litigation in Stolen Generations Cases', Online PDF file, Institute of Criminology, University of Sydney Law School, Sydney, 2003

[3] Cuneen and Grix, 'The Limitations of Litigation in Stolen Generations Cases'

[4] P. O'Connor, 'History on Trial: Cubillo and Gunner v. The Commonwealth of Australia', *Alternative Law Journal*, 26, 1, 2001, p 27; see also M. Flynn and S. Stanton, 'Trial by Ordeal: The Stolen Generations in Court', *Alternative Law Journal*, 25, 2, 2000, p 75

anything rather than admit their clients had unconvincing cases to start with.

A different approach has been to argue that the failure of the legal system to provide a victory meant politicians should step in and give them one anyway. The activist Catholic priest Frank Brennan offered the following interpretation of Justice O'Loughlin's dismissal of the Cubillo and Gunner case:

> a very painstaking decision written once again by an Adelaide-based judge, looking at the situation in the Northern Territory but saying with deep regret, 'Look, the evidence and the law doesn't carry.' But saying, 'There is an extraordinary moral wrong here that needs to be rectified, and it's up to politicians to do something.'[5]

O'Loughlin did not, of course, use any of the words Brennan attributed to him. As Chapter Ten's discussion of the Cubillo and Gunner case demonstrates, it would require a highly creative interpretation of his judgement to think he intended anything of the kind.

The chronology of litigation since 1993 by people claiming to be members of the Stolen Generations does not provide any grounds for believing the pattern discussed here is likely to be turned around by the Prime Minister's apology: [6]

1993 Supreme Court (New South Wales): Joy Williams files notice of motion seeking an extension of time to bring a claim for negligence, breach of fiduciary duty and wrongful imprisonment against the relevant minister and the state of New South Wales. Justice Studdert rejects her application.

1994 Court of Appeal (New South Wales): Joy Williams is granted an extension of time.

1995 High Court: Alex Kruger, George Bray and seven other members of the Stolen Generations begin legal proceedings challenging the constitutional validity of the Northern Territory ordinance that authorised their removal from their families.

1996 High Court: Lorna Cubillo and Peter Gunner begin proceedings in the High Court. They sue the Commonwealth for wrongful imprisonment, breach of statutory duty, negligence, and breach of fiduciary duty arising from their removal from their families and their detention in institutions. The matter is remitted to the Federal Court.

[5] Frank Brennan, interview, *The Law Report*, ABC Radio, 15 August 2000

[6] Chris Cuneen and Julia Grix, 'Chronology of the Stolen Generations Litigation 1993–2003', *Indigenous Law Bulletin*, 17, 2003

1997 High Court: Alex Kruger and others lose their claim when the court finds the ordinances under which Aborigines were removed were constitutionally valid, were not examples of legislation designed to be punitive towards that racial group, and were not instruments of genocide

1998 Supreme Court (New South Wales): Eileen Stevens lodges claim against the New South Wales government. The claim alleges she was removed in the 1930s and placed in government institutions and then in private domestic service. It says she suffered abuse and mistreatment resulting in profound emotional harm. Stevens then withdraws her case because it was 'too traumatic' to continue and for 'privacy considerations'.

1998 Supreme Court (South Australia): Bruce Trevorrow, a client of the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement, files a statement of claim against the state of South Australia for injuries suffered as a result of his removal from his family when aged thirteen months.

1999 Victims Compensation Tribunal (New South Wales): Judy Stubbs loses claim for compensation for removal from her family and subsequent abuse. 'Any way we turn, there is this big brick wall.'

1999 Master Harrison (New South Wales): Christopher Johnson loses his application for an extension of the time period in which he can commence proceedings for damages against the Department of Community Services.

1999 Supreme Court (New South Wales): Justice Rolfe grants Christopher Johnson an extension of time.

1999 Supreme Court (New South Wales): Joy Williams loses her claim before Justice Abadee against the New South Wales government over the harm caused to her by her removal.

2000 Federal Court (Northern Territory): Lorna Cubillo and Peter Gunner's case dismissed by Justice Maurice O'Loughlin.

2000 Court of Appeal (New South Wales): Joy Williams loses her appeal to the New South Wales Court of Appeal.

2000 Supreme Court (New South Wales): 'Anne' files a statement of claim against the state of New South Wales for injuries suffered as a result of her removal at two years of age. She dies one year later, before a hearing date is set.

2001 Federal Court (Northern Territory): Lorna Cubillo and Peter Gunner lose their appeal to the Full Court of the Federal Court.

2002 High Court: Lorna Cubillo and Peter Gunner lose their appeal from the Full Federal Court to the High Court.

2002 Victims Compensation Tribunal (New South Wales): Valerie Linow's compensation claim is rejected because the assessor was not satisfied that her injuries were caused by the sexual assault she suffered after she was removed by the Aborigines Welfare Board and placed with a family as a domestic worker. An appeal from the assessor's determination is later upheld and Linow is awarded $35,000 compensation for her injuries.

2002 Federal Court (Northern Territory): Ten test claims go before the Federal Court. Seven subsequently discontinued and one proceeds. The Court anticipates the Crown would seek summary dismissal of these claims.

2007 Supreme Court (South Australia): Bruce Trevorrow is awarded $525,000 in damages and exemplary damages after Justice Gray finds that he was removed illegally, that the state breached its duty of care to him, that he was falsely imprisoned, and that he was subject to malfeasance in public office.

In addition to these cases, Cunneen and Grix reported that some successful claims in Victoria, with awards of $4000 each, had been made under the state's criminal injuries compensation scheme. In Western Australia, Rosalie Fraser applied unsuccessfully to the state's crime compensation scheme for damages for assaults she said occurred while she was in foster care. One case against the New South Wales state government was settled out of court on undisclosed terms. They authors observed that, apart from Bruce Trevorrow, the only successful actions had been for compensation for particular injuries that occurred after removal and while children were in care, and the only hearings that gave them any results were compensation tribunals, not courts.

THE UNFORTUNATE LIFE OF BRUCE TREVORROW

In August 2007, Justice Thomas Gray of the South Australian Supreme Court awarded a part-Aboriginal man, Bruce Trevorrow, the sum of $525,000 as compensation for injuries and losses he suffered after being separated from his parents when a baby, and as damages for his unlawful removal and false imprisonment. In February 2008, Justice Gray awarded Trevorrow another $250,000 as a lump sum in lieu of interest payments owed on the original award. Aboriginal activists greeted the outcome as a victory for the Stolen Generations and confirmation of the truth of their claims. Lowitja O'Donoghue told the Melbourne *Age* the Federal government should

'take a leaf out of the book of Canada' and, rather than force claimants to endure a lengthy court process, set up a non-judicial tribunal to make compensation payments to all indigenous people forcibly removed:

> I want to say to the Australian Government and the Australian people that it is time to accept the history of Australia. It is time to understand there was a stolen generation, instead of all these history wars that have been debated since the *Bringing Them Home* report. [7]

On Christmas Day in 1957, a couple drove up to the Adelaide Children's Hospital with a very ill 13-month-old baby boy. The hospital admission record described the boy as a 'neglected child — without parents'. The record said he suffered from 'malnutrition' and 'infective diarrhoea'. The following note appeared on the history sheet:

> Brought up by Mr and Mrs R. Evans, Meningie. Child unwell ... Apparently been in the Tailem Bend Hosp. for abdominal trouble previously. He is one of three ¼ caste children. The other two children are neglected. Mother has cleared out and father is boozing. Apparently father is nourishing the children with alcohol (could almoner please investigate).[8]

Mr and Mrs Evans were not the boy's parents. They had been asked by Joseph Trevorrow to transport his baby son Bruce to the hospital in the city, 150 kilometres distant, because they were the only people he could find who had a car. Mrs Evans was a relative who lived not far from him at One Mile Camp near the town of Meningie, on the southern shore of Lake Alexandrina. Joseph and his de facto wife Thora Lampard had three other children, aged from nine to three years.

Justice Gray found that the information about Bruce Trevorrow's family life on the hospital history sheet was untrue. Even though it was provided by Mr and Mrs Evans who knew the couple, and were related to them, the judge preferred other contemporary evidence that told a different story. In particular, he was persuaded by a letter written to the Aborigines Protection Board by the officer in charge of Meningie Police Station, Sergeant F. E. Liebing, who had been to the Trevorrow home in August and December 1957 and observed its living conditions. Shortly before Christmas Day, he had seen Bruce at the house and observed him to be healthy and well cared for. Rather

[7] 'Stolen Generation Payout' *The Age*, 2 August 2007; 'Test for Stolen Generations Payout', *The Australian*, 28 February 2008

[8] Gray, J, *Trevorrow v. State of South Australia* (No 5) [2007] SASC 285, Supreme Court of South Australia, Judgement of the Honorable Justice Gray, 1 August 2007, para 110. This information on the patient's history sheet was given by Mr and Mrs Evans, para 815.

than having abandoned the family at Christmas, the mother Thora was absent for only about one week. Other evidence came from John Weightman, a welfare officer with the Aborigines Department who visited the home in March 1958. He found the building and surroundings 'reasonably clean and tidy'. The only child at home, a 3-year-old boy, was 'warmly clad and only a little dirty from playing'. At the time, Joseph was employed on a nearby farm. Weightman wrote:

> The general impression I gained from the visit was that, while living conditions were far from ideal, I could not recommend that any child be committed due to the unsatisfactory state of the home.[9]

On the strength of this and some other corroborating evidence, Justice Gray found Bruce was not neglected, his father was not a drunkard who gave his children alcohol, and his mother had not cleared out. She had left home after an argument with Joseph about his eldest son from an earlier marriage who had been living with them until arrested by the police.[10] Justice Gray found Bruce's family was poor but loving. His judgement said:

> The Trevorrow family were fringe dwellers on the outskirts of Meningie, building their accommodation from second-hand materials and living partly off the land and partly by purchased supplies. However, the general picture of a well-nourished family, both physically and mentally, and of a happy family emerged from the evidence.
>
> The evidence established that Joseph was generally in regular although casual employment. The children were adequately clothed and fed. Joseph took an active interest in his children's education. He encouraged their attendance at school. Thora was a loving mother who cared for her children and the home.[11]

Moreover, Gray found that when he was admitted to hospital on Christmas Day, Bruce was not suffering from malnutrition. This was despite the fact that the paediatrician who examined him on admission actually diagnosed this as his condition. During the trial, the psychiatrist Professor Robert Goldney told why he believed the baby was malnourished:

> [T]he very fact that [the plaintiff] was admitted to the Children's Hospital in a malnourished state and I would refer to the report of the paediatrician — I think it is the paediatrician Dr Walker, where he has documented the weights and clearly indicated he was malnourished.

[9] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, para 322
[10] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, para 108
[11] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, paras 99–100

However, Gray preferred the conclusions of other medical specialists at the trial who examined the records of the baby's diagnosis and concluded he had acute bacterial gastroenteritis and, as a result, had suffered dehydration and weight loss, giving him merely the appearance of being malnourished. This was established, Gray said, by the fact that the hospital's treatment for his gastroenteritis was successful and he quickly recovered. By 6 January 1958, twelve days after his admission, Bruce had regained weight and was able to be discharged from hospital.[12]

However, he was not discharged into the care of his parents. Instead, a welfare officer of the South Australian Aborigines Department placed him in the foster care of a white family. Shortly before, a white woman in Adelaide, Martha Davies, had responded to a newspaper advertisement seeking foster parents for Aboriginal babies:

> ABORIGINAL BABIES NEED HOMES
>
> The [APB] wants foster homes for four aboriginal babies recently brought to Adelaide from settlements and now in the Children's Hospital and McBride Maternity Hospital.
>
> There are two boys and a girl aged six months and a six-week-old girl.[13]

On 6 January 1958 the Aborigines Department advised Mrs Davies to go to the Adelaide Children's Hospital to see a baby boy. She went with her husband Frank. They saw Bruce and were told he was neglected and abandoned because his mother had 'gone on a walkabout'. They took him home that day. No paperwork for the removal was completed at the time. Marjory Angas, a welfare officer of the Aborigines Department, approved the handover on behalf of the Aborigines Protection Board. At the time, Martha Davies did not have the licence normally required of a foster parent. No one made an attempt to assess her suitability as a foster parent. The Aborigines Protection Board did not send her the proper application form until 6 February and she was not formally licensed until 20 February, more than six weeks after she gained custody of the boy.[14]

Justice Gray did not comment on the fact that neither of Bruce's parents went to visit him in hospital during the twelve days he was there from 25 December until 6 February. Instead, he placed sole blame for the removal on Marjory Angas, the welfare officer who, it emerged during the case, had been so convinced that Bruce's parents were unfit to care for him that she lied to them about both his condi-

[12] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, paras 112–14

[13] *Advertiser*, 7 December 1957, cited in Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, para 426

[14] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, paras 117–21

tion and his whereabouts. On 25 July 1958, Thora wrote to Angas for information about Bruce:

> Dear Mrs Angas,
> I am writing to ask if you will let me know how baby Bruce is and how long before I can have him home as I have not forgot I got a baby in there and I would like something defenat about him this time trust you will let me know as soon as possible.
> Yours faithfully [Thora]
> Meningie

Gray observed that the reference to 'this time' indicated Thora had made at least one earlier request. On 19 August 1958, the secretary of the Aborigines Protection Board replied in a letter apparently drafted by Angas:

> [Bruce] is making good progress but as yet the doctor does not consider him fit to go home.

Angas did not mention that the boy had already been in the foster care of another family for seven months. Gray said the inability of anyone to find a record of the alleged medical advice of 'the doctor', who was unidentified, satisfied him that no such advice existed.[15]

In May 1959, Thora made another attempt to see Bruce, this time by appealing to Constable Goldie of the Meningie Police Station. Goldie wrote to the secretary of the Aborigines Protection Board about a conversation he had with her:

> [Thora] has asked me to mention another matter to you. She says that she has a child, [the plaintiff], aged two years, in the care of the [Aborigines Protection Board]. [Thora] states that the child has been in the care of the Board for the past eighteen months and although she has tried on numerous occasions to see the child she has not been allowed to do so. I wonder if you could possibly look into this matter please and inform [Thora] whether she would be allowed to see the child or not.

Once again in a letter apparently drafted by Angas (since it bore her initials), the secretary of the board replied:

> With reference to [the plaintiff], aged 2 years, I wish to advise that [Thora], has for many years lived improperly with [Joseph]. She has proved to be a most unsuitable mother for any of her children, and in the case of the above-mentioned child who was removed from her care due to the fact that he had been left by his mother in a critical condition.
>
> It is most unlikely that I would be able to agree to this child being returned to the mother as her home is not in any way satisfactory for the benefit of the child's health.

[15] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, paras 125–7

> As far as I am aware [Thora] has never requested that she actually see [the plaintiff], but has demanded that the child be returned to her care.
>
> It would be possible for [Thora] to see [the plaintiff] in the presence of a Welfare Officer if suitable arrangements were made in advance. It would also be necessary for her to fully understand that the child will not be returned to her.[16]

One of the issues put by the defence at the trial was how little effort the mother made to have her son returned to her. Gray rejected any suggestion of this kind. Thora did seek contact with Bruce and ask for his return and 'did so repeatedly over a period of years'. The secretary's response that Thora had not asked to actually see the child was 'disingenuous'. Her pleas for her child were 'clear and consistent'. The assertion that she had left him in a critical condition was 'plainly incorrect'. The board revealed 'a level of determination' that she not be reunited with her son.[17]

Indeed, even after the proclamation of South Australia's Aboriginal Affairs Act in 1963, which abolished the Aborigines Protection Board and reverted legal guardianship of separated children to their natural Aboriginal parents, no one in authority made any attempt to notify Thora of her rights. In fact, no one raised the issue with Thora until 1966 when she again approached the Department of Aboriginal Affairs about the return of her son. Bruce's father Joseph died in January 1966 without ever seeing the boy again. That was ten months before Bruce was finally reunited with his mother in November 1966 at the department's Adelaide offices, on his tenth birthday.

Why was Marjory Angas so determined to deny Thora access to the boy that she lied to her? She died before the case came to trial so could not provide any evidence of her own or be cross-examined. Nonetheless, Justice Gray went into the question in some depth. For a start, Angas apparently had a genuine belief that when Bruce was admitted to the Children's Hospital he was, as the history sheet said, suffering malnutrition. She saw the diagnosis recorded by the paediatrician on duty at the time, Dr Walker, who weighed the boy 'and clearly indicated he was malnourished'.[18] Even twenty years later, when she wrote a report recognizing the psychological damage Bruce had suffered in his childhood, Angas still reaffirmed that belief. Gray's judgement did not dispute that she held this view, even though he disagreed strongly that the boy was actually malnourished.[19]

Angas had first met Thora and Joseph in April 1957, just four weeks after she joined the Aborigines Department as welfare officer

[16] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, paras 130–1
[17] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, paras 132–3
[18] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, para 793
[19] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, para 265

of the Aborigines Protection Board. She visited their home to report on the condition of Bruce's older sisters, Alice and Rita Trevorrow. Following the visit, a letter she drafted said:

> We understand, the father [Joseph] of Meningie is illiterate and an habitual drunkard. He has a defacto wife, [Thora]. There are several illegitimate children of this union. [Joseph] has no permanent employment. Conditions in this camp are reported as most undesirable for children. Periodically [Thora] is forced to leave home and seek assistance for herself and the children.

Gray said her understanding of the family situation was 'materially inaccurate'. He had seen no evidence that Thora had ever been forced to leave home and apply for assistance. Joseph was in regular employment and was not a habitual drunkard.[20] Gray described Angas as 'well-intentioned but unwittingly prejudiced' in her dealings with Thora and Joseph.

> It would appear that Mrs Angas was prejudiced against Joseph and Thora. I infer that this was the result of Mrs Angas' relative inexperience when first dealing with the family and misinformation provided to her.[21]

Observing that when Angas sent Bruce out to foster care she had been a welfare officer for less than nine months, Gray said her prejudices led her to break the rules of the normal procedures welfare officers followed when a child was removed from its natural parents and placed in foster care.

> She was aware, or ought to have been aware, of the importance of maintaining ongoing contact between mother and child, and of both the natural parents' and child's right to have contact. Evidence from welfare officers confirmed that the usual practice was for contact to be maintained between natural family and child after removal. I am satisfied that there was no medical reason why the plaintiff should not have been returned to his mother, and that this suggested excuse proffered by Mrs Angas was simply a ruse to avoid the plaintiff being returned to Thora.[22]

It was not until September 1977, when Bruce, aged 20, was before a court charged with break, enter and theft, that Angas wrote a report for the judge that publicly recognized the damage caused by his removal as a baby. Over the entire two decades, Angas had not only been the welfare officer who decided his fate but she also remained his confidant:

> Although [the plaintiff] now lives with his family at Meningie it must be recognized that he has suffered severe maternal deprivation at a time of his

[20] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, paras 137–8
[21] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, paras 142, 144
[22] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, paras 90, 144

> life when his mother's influence was most necessary for his development. In his particular case [the plaintiff] has also been deprived of a reliable mother substitute.
>
> Psychiatrist assessments carried out on [the plaintiff] whilst he was under the supervision of the Child Guidance Clinic and Hillcrest Hospital indicate that [the plaintiff's] behavioural problems may be influenced by psychological and/or other damage of a more permanent nature. ...
>
> [The plaintiff] and his family circumstances have been known to me since 1957 and I have personal knowledge and experience of the deprivation which [the plaintiff] has suffered. Like many young people who have been segregated from normal family relationships [the plaintiff] has problems in identifying with any particular group, individual and/or family. He does however report his circumstances quite frequently to me.[23]

The range of health and behavioural problems Bruce displayed had emerged during his early childhood. Justice Gray was persuaded by both the chronology of events and their interpretation by child psychologists and psychiatrists that they were caused by the maternal deprivation he suffered by being removed from his natural mother.

Although Martha and Frank Davies initially treated him as just another member of the family, which included their three natural children, by the age of three he was diagnosed with *trichotilliomania*, a condition in which fretful infants pull out large patches of their hair. It was a sign of an early depressive condition.[24] Bruce also had a speech defect and a mild form of cerebral palsy, which was not diagnosed until later in his life. As he grew, his complexion darkened and, to prepare him for school, the family told him he was Aboriginal, although this did not sink in until some time later.[25]

By age eight he knew he was not the family's natural child. He began stealing money from family members and regularly soiling his underwear on the way home from school. At the same time, his foster mother developed a psychological condition of her own and was hospitalized for it. Martha was now responding to Bruce's disruptive behaviour by threatening to force him to leave the family and be placed elsewhere. He began what became a frequent program of consultations with child psychologists and psychiatrists.[26]

By September 1966, when Bruce was ten years old, his natural mother again contacted the Department of Aboriginal Affairs asking to see him. The department arranged a meeting at its offices between Thora, her other children and Bruce. By this time, Thora's second marriage had broken down and she and her children were living in

[23] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, para 265
[24] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, paras 149–50
[25] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, paras 154–5
[26] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, paras 159–65

welfare housing at Victor Harbor, a town on Encounter Bay, just west of the mouth of the Murray River. Bruce visited them one weekend in January 1967, escorted there and back by a welfare officer.[27] Afterwards, Bruce's behaviour with his foster family deteriorated and Martha complained to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. More psychiatric consultations resulted in the prescription of tranquillisers. In May 1967, a welfare officer again accompanied Bruce to Victor Harbor to spend the school holidays with his natural family. During the visit, the department decided he should remain there permanently. An officer collected his belongings from Martha's household and the transfer was complete. The following month, a welfare officer and a child psychiatrist visited Victor Harbor. Although they found him lonely, friendless and overwhelmed by his new surroundings, his mother said he had nonetheless 'settled in very well' at home and at school.[28]

Twelve months later, however, Bruce was arrested by the police at Victor Harbor and charged with several counts of theft and housebreaking. When she learnt of the offences, Thora beat him severely and refused to have him back in her house. He spent a month on remand in the Windana Boys Home, during which time Martha, although informed of where he was, made no attempt to contact him. On 26 July 1968, the magistrate at the Victor Harbor Juvenile Court ordered he be placed in the care of the Minister of Social Welfare until he reached eighteen years of age. He was then transferred to the Glandore Boys' Home.[29] At the time, EEG scans found 'organic brain disease, or more likely damage', indicating he had suffered numerous brief epileptic fits.[30]

Bruce spent the following ten years in a variety of institutions, including boys' reformatories, a mental hospital, and several schools and vocational training centres for disturbed youth. Although prescribed repeated medication of tranquillisers, antidepressants and anticonvulsants, he was prone to frequent outbursts of violence. He had few friends and, if not on medication, constantly fought with other boys. His institutional life was punctuated by short periods of foster care with his grown-up Aboriginal siblings and occasional weekend visits to his mother. Aged thirteen, when a child psychiatrist diagnosed that he desperately wanted to 'belong' to a family, he was placed with a different white foster mother. These attempts to normalize his relationships all ended in much the same way, with bouts

[27] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, paras 173–80
[28] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, paras 186, 190–1
[29] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, paras 193–203
[30] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, para 207

of him ripping his clothes, spitting food, wetting himself, stealing and being violent.[31] In 1971, aged fifteen, he was arrested and charged with assault, breaking and entering, larceny and consuming liquor while a minor. He had been drinking heavily most of that year. He was released into the care of his mother. He soon broke parole, left home and travelled around South Australia and interstate. In 1972 he appeared in Euston Children's Court in New South Wales on a charge of stealing a motor vehicle. He was released on a good behaviour bond again into the care of his mother. However, he absconded yet again and spent a year wandering aimlessly around Australia.

After he ceased to be a juvenile, the judiciary remained just as tolerant of his criminal offences. In 1976, aged nineteen, he was sentenced to 28 days in prison for resisting arrest, assault, disorderly behaviour, wilful damage, break and enter, and larceny. However, the sentence was suspended on him entering a good behaviour bond.[32] Indeed, the only substantial time he spent in jail was from February to June 1990 when he was employed first as a trainee prison officer and then as a prison officer at Pentridge Prison, Victoria.[33]

As an adult, Bruce's employment history was a combination of stable periods of work interrupted by periods of unemployment. Apart from labouring work with local government bodies and the railways in South Australia and Queensland, much of his employment was in public sector job creation programs with quotas for people of Aboriginal descent. He met Veronica Pepper in 1980. She was a relative of his mother. They married and had four children. They spent most of their married life in the Gippsland district town of Bairnsdale, Victoria.[34] However, the mental disturbance and inability to form lasting relationships that dogged Bruce throughout his childhood and youth affected his married life too. 'The marriage has not been happy,' Justice Gray observed. 'To the contrary, it is an unhappy and unsatisfactory relationship.'

> The plaintiff's relationship with his wife has from time to time been violent. To a large extent this has been exacerbated by the plaintiff's depression and alcohol abuse. In April 1985, following a brawl with his wife when he was intoxicated, the plaintiff was hospitalized with a head injury. On another occasion, on 24 August 1994, the plaintiff was charged with

[31] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, paras 207, 214, 217–25
[32] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, paras 250–63
[33] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, para 273
[34] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, paras 268, 271–6

common assault on his wife, however the charge was subsequently withdrawn.[35]

Bruce suffered from his early ailments and illnesses all his adult life. In 1992 he was admitted again to a psychiatric hospital. In 1997, he was treated for problems associated with psychosis. He spoke to a doctor about experiencing voices and suicidal thoughts. He also spoke about alcohol abuse and binge drinking. A report from the Meningie Health Service in November 1997 indicated he was suffering from chronic depression with intermittent episodes of acute psychosis, post-traumatic stress disorder, ischaemic heart disease, chronic obstructive airways disease with recent severe exacerbation requiring ventilation, and giant cell arteritis. In 1998, he was assessed as presenting with moderate depression with anxiety, considerable social stressors, poor physical health and non-compliance with prescribed medication. In May 2000, he was admitted to hospital with a stab wound to the chest and a collapsed lung. The incident occurred at a party when he and his wife engaged in a violent quarrel.[36]

In his judgement, Gray held this myriad of problems could all be traced to Bruce's removal from his natural mother as a baby. In applying what he called a 'commonsense test' to the long-term consequences of his removal and the maternal deprivation that entailed, the judge declared 'that causation had been established'.[37]

> All causes of action had at their *genesis* the plaintiff's removal from his natural family and the severing of the attachment between mother and child. This, from a commonsense point of view, was a material cause of his serious lifelong depression and its sequelae. His depression has led to feelings of inadequacy and worthlessness, difficulties with alcohol and difficulty coping with the everyday exigencies of life.[38]

Establishing one single cause for all Bruce's problems was beyond the ability of Justice Gray, or indeed anyone else. Causation in social problems requires more than 'commonsense'. At the very least, it requires testing by comparison with a control group of other people from a very similar background but who were not subject to the single factor suspected of being the cause. The history of Bruce's siblings and half-siblings, who were not removed from their family as babies but who nonetheless had their own share of social and behavioural problems, indicated Bruce would have suffered at least some of the same problems even if he had not been maternally deprived.

[35] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, paras 269–70
[36] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, paras 294–5
[37] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, para 1140
[38] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, para 1139 [emphasis in original]

When Bruce was born his father already had three children from a former marriage. Two of them spent time in institutional care during their adolescence. The eldest, also called Joseph Trevorrow, then aged twenty, was living with his father and Thora in 1957 when he was arrested for two offences and sentenced to eight weeks in the Adelaide Prison. At about the same time, Joseph's other two older daughters, Rita (seventeen) and Alice (fifteen), were the subject of a police report. Rita was placed by the Aborigines Department as a domestic servant at Woomera in the state's outback, and Alice was committed to Vaughan House Training School for 'wayward girls'.[39]

Although they had three children of their own, the relationship between Joseph and Thora was not stable. Five months after Bruce was removed from what Justice Gray called his 'caring and loving parents',[40] Thora abandoned the family to marry Cyril Karpany. She left her three remaining children, Hilda (nine), George (five) and Tom (three) with their father. However, Joseph promptly sent the two boys to live with his sister, Mrs Vizzard. The arrangement came to the attention of Sergeant Liebing of the Meningie police, who was so concerned he wrote to the Aborigines Protection Board:

> I would appreciated [*sic*] if when one of your officers next visits this area to visit Mrs Vizzard and sees to the welfare of these children. I am of the strong opinion that neither [Joseph] nor Thora should be allowed to look after these children due to their past conduct. Mrs Vizzard is an elderly woman and the tie of these children may be too great for her and I am also informed that she suffers from mental troubles and in one of these conditions she may endanger the lives of these children.[41]

Twelve months later, Mrs Vizzard called at the office of the Aborigines Protection Board asking to be relieved of the care of the boys since she could no longer care for them. The department offered to place them in either a foster family or its home for boys at Semaphore in Adelaide, but Joseph refused. So they went to live with Thora for a time.[42] However, Thora's relationship with Cyril Karpany was hardly ideal. Justice Gray called the marriage 'turbulent and violent'. When drunk, Cyril would frequently bash Thora. One assault on her was so severe he served time in prison.[43] The Trevorrow children told the court that Cyril was not usually violent towards them, except George

[39] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, para 101; Helen Jones, 'Dorothy Vaughan, (1881–1974)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 12, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1990, p 315
[40] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, para 827
[41] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, para 323
[42] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, paras 324–5
[43] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, para 309

whom he 'belted' for trying to defend his mother.[44] The children soon went back to live with Joseph and remained there until his death in 1967. Meanwhile, Thora's new family remained in abject poverty. Cyril found little work and the couple and their own children relied upon loans and handouts from the Aborigines Department. In September 1963, when Thora was pregnant with the third child of the relationship, welfare officer Brian Bennett visited them and reported:

> The family have moved between Tailem Bend, Meningie and Bonney Reserve during the past two years, living under shocking circumstances. Recently due to [Thora's] confinement they moved to Tailem Bend again and are now living in what is known as Taylor's shack. The reason for moving was to enable [Thora] to be near medical attention. It is known that [Thora] has been suffering from Toxaemia of pregnancy, and heart condition and requires the maximum amount of rest possible.
>
> I visited the shack on 6th September, 1963, and found that the shack is far from weather-proof, having deteriorated during this severe winter. The floor and mattresses were damp, and the whole structure drafty. As the shack is situated on the river bank it is necessary for [Thora] to climb a particularly steep cliff each time she visits Tailem Bend for shopping or for medical attention. Toilet facilities are nil.
>
> I arranged for [Thora] to be admitted to the Tailem Bend hospital on my last visit which means that she will be due for discharge very soon, and will be taking a new born baby into these surroundings. As employment with accommodation has proved negative, I am of the opinion that something must be done to assist this family.[45]

In 1965, Thora gave up Cyril as 'a hopeless case' and left him. Marjory Angas arranged for the Aborigines Department to give her a house at Victor Harbor plus rental allowance and cash assistance. With the department as her provider, Thora's life finally gained some stability. However, problems with her children continued. In September 1967, she was convicted of failing to send Tom, one of her three children with Joseph, to school. As a result, Tom was sent to Glandore Boys' Home for six months.[46]

These, then, were the alternatives available to Bruce Trevorrow had he not been removed from his parents in January 1958. While Justice Gray was clearly right to point to the numerous psychological afflictions that derived from the removal, it is hard to believe all the difficulties of his life could be attributed to it. Even if Bruce had remained with his mother, the cerebral palsy he suffered from birth and the brain damage caused by his childhood epilepsy would proba-

[44] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, para 310
[45] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, para 311
[46] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, paras 315–6

bly have ensured he suffered many of the social and behavioural problem he experienced throughout his life. The troubled lives of his siblings indicated the burden of social strife he would have faced had he remained where he was.

However, none of these qualifications invalidate the central finding of Justice Gray that Bruce suffered seriously from his childhood separation. It clearly exacerbated his existing physical disabilities. He deserved a verdict in his favour. This was especially so, given the major issue I have not discussed so far, but which was virtually guaranteed to settle the case in his favour from the outset: the fact that the actions of the Aborigines Protection Board in placing Bruce in foster care without his parents' agreement was actually illegal at the time. That issue is discussed in a section below, but let me first record the final events in the chronology of this case.

In February 2008, the South Australian government lodged an appeal against Justice Gray's decision. The Labor government of Mike Rann said it was seeking clarification on 'points of law' and did not want the return of the $775,00 payout, which had been made only the month before.[47] However, in the notice of appeal lodged in the South Australian Supreme Court registry on 28 February, the government challenged the payout of $525,000 and the additional amount of $250,000 for interest owed on the original. The registry notice said: 'This appeal is against the whole of the judgements.' The government sought to have every order made by Justice Gray set aside, including the size of the damages. It set out more than twenty-five disputes of the facts of the case. Among them was a dispute of the judge's finding that Bruce's parents did not consent to their son's removal.[48]

On 20 June 2008, just five months after he received his compensation, Bruce Trevorrow died. He was aged 51. He had been admitted to hospital four weeks before suffering heart and lung problems. Although placed in an intensive care ward he suffered a fatal heart attack. He was still married to Veronica who was at his bedside at the time, along with no fewer than fifteen other relatives. His death initially cast doubt on the future of the government's appeal against Justice Gray's decision. However, to avoid being engaged in legal action against a dead man, the government succeeded in having his widow replaced as defendant in the appeal. Lawyers for the widow, then known as Veronica Lampard-Trevorrow, argued in the state Supreme Court for the appeal to be stayed because of the huge pay-out of legal costs against the estate if the appeal was successful. Bar-

[47] 'Test for Stolen Generations Payout', *Australian*, 29 February 2008
[48] 'Stolen Generations Payout Challenged', *Australian*, 1 March 2008

rister for the widow, Julian Burnside, told judge Richard White that it would be an injustice to allow the state to run a lengthy appeal to get a costs order and then use it to reclaim an amount greater than the damages. Burnside said the state's legal costs of more than $1 million would bankrupt the Trevorrow estate if costs were enforced.[49]

On 24 December 2008, Justice White dismissed the bid to have the appeal permanently stayed. The judge said whatever sympathy he might have for the circumstances of Mrs Lampard-Trevorrow and the difficult position she had been placed in, the government's appeal was not an abuse of the court's process. 'The exercise of appeal rights is an ordinary incident of litigation, well known to all who participate in it, whether as plaintiffs or defendants.'[50]

WAS BRUCE TREVORROW ONE OF THE STOLEN GENERATIONS?

Does the Bruce Trevorrow case reveal the existence of the Stolen Generations in South Australia? It is not difficult to demonstrate that the evidence provided in the case proved the opposite. If the removal of Bruce Trevorrow really was part of a project to end the Aboriginality of all those like him, why were his older sister and brothers not removed in similar circumstances? When Marjory Angas wrote in 1957 that Joseph Trevorrow was an habitual drunkard, that his premises were most undesirable for children and that his wife was forced to leave home and beg for relief, why did she not use the opportunity to remove all the children in the household? Of the four children born to Joseph and Thora, Bruce was removed for ten years, Tom was removed much later for six months (for chronic truancy), but Hilda and George were never removed at all. This was not the pattern one would expect if government officers were operating with the policies the Stolen Generations theory attributed to them. None of the Trevorrow children were removed permanently and, apart from Bruce, none were denied access to their parents or their culture. Rather than never returning, Bruce and Tom were both re-united with their mother by the same welfare officers who removed them.

In fact, the very evidence that Justice Gray used to reject claims that Bruce was a neglected child and to deny that Joseph and Thora were unfit parents came from reports written by welfare and police officers who *declined* to remove the other children because their living conditions and family life did not warrant it. The judge placed considerable weight on the views of the Aborigines Department welfare

[49] 'Costs Threaten to Eat up Bruce Trevorrow's Stolen Generations Payout', *Australian*, 16 December 2008

[50] 'SA Stolen Generations Appeal to Go Ahead', *SMH.com.au*, 24 December 2008

officer John Weightman who visited the Trevorrow home in March 1958 and, as noted earlier, reported: 'The general impression I gained from the visit was that, while living conditions were far from ideal, I could not recommend that any child be committed due to the unsatisfactory state of the home.'[51] In May 1959, as also noted earlier, after Joseph's sister Mrs Vizzard told the Aborigines Department she could no longer look after Joseph's two sons, George and Tom, the department asked Meningie police to investigate the boys' condition. Constable Goldie reported:

> At present the boys are being cared for by their mother, [Thora] and she states that she will look after them for as long as she possibly can. The boys have been in her care for the past six weeks.
>
> I have seen the two boys in question and they appear to be quite happy fit and well.[52]

The fact that these officers, from different departments and on different dates, were asked to investigate matters and make up their own minds quite freely on the basis of what they saw, is good evidence that there was no coordinated plan to remove children wherever possible. They determined their findings from what they saw with their own eyes.

Moreover, at least one officer on the Aborigines Department, Marjorie Angas, regarded Thora as a 'most unsuitable mother for any of her children',[53] and one of the police at Meningie, Sergeant F. E. Liebing, thought much the same: 'I am of the strong opinion that neither [Joseph] nor Thora should be allowed to look after these children due to their past conduct.'[54] Yet the weight of their opinion was insufficient to counter that of the others and cause the removal of the remaining children. In other words, there was obviously no collusion between all the officers involved to bring about a result that fitted some underlying scheme.

Another thing the evidence in Justice Gray's judgement demonstrated was that Aboriginal parents had the right to be consulted about the removal of their children and the right to *reject* government proposals for separation. There were at least two occasions during Joseph Trevorrow's rearing of his children when he exercised those rights. In May 1959, after Mrs Vizzard said she was no longer capable of looking after his sons George and Tom, the secretary of the Aborigines Protection Board asked Joseph to permit the boys to be placed at the department's institution for boys at Semaphore. Joseph refused, saying

[51] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, para 322
[52] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, para 325
[53] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, para 131
[54] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, para 323

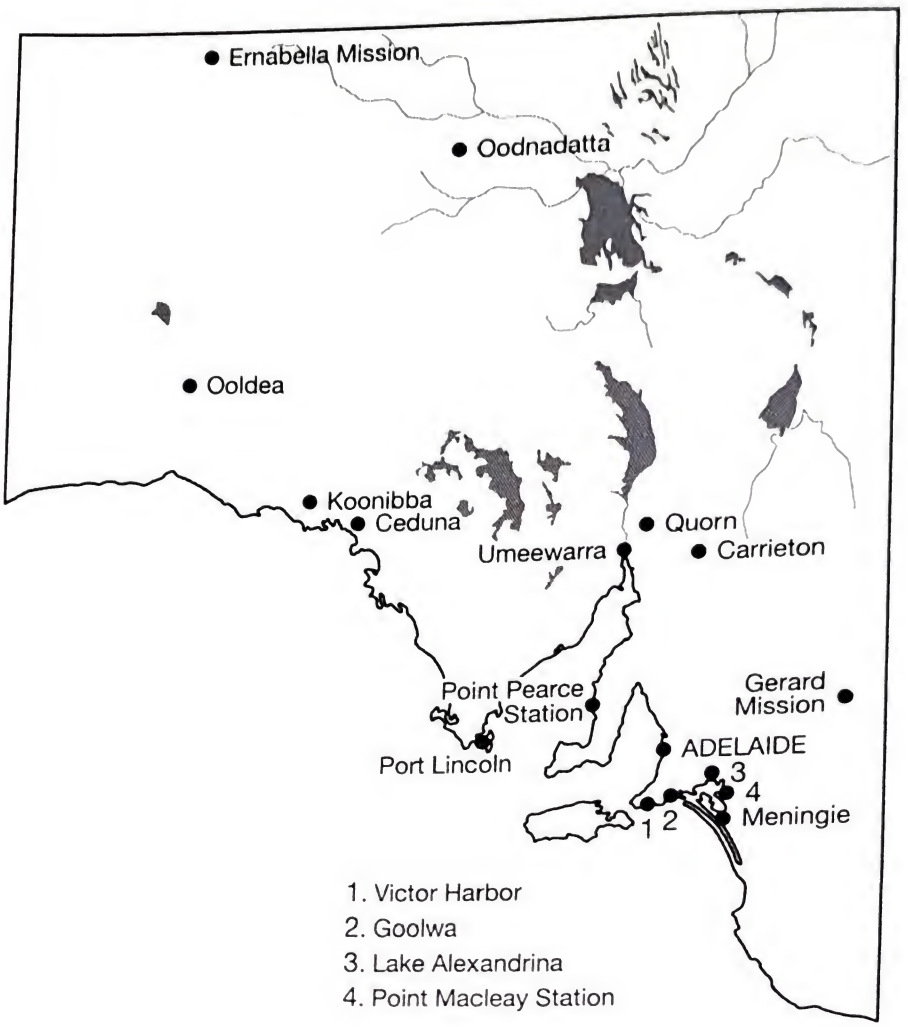
'the boys were happy and did not want for anything'. They did not go to Semaphore.[55] In March 1960, after Joseph approached the Meningie Police Station asking for assistance for his children since he was out of work and food was scarce, the officer in charge forwarded the request to the Aborigines Protection Board. The secretary of the board wrote back suggesting the boys should be placed in foster homes. Joseph again refused and the boys remained with him.[56]

The Trevorrow case also disproved another contention of the theory of the Stolen Generations. The practice of child removal in South Australia did not involve an attempt to bring up children to make them believe they were white. Rather than being denied contact with their natural parents and families, children who were separated were encouraged to *retain* contact with them. Justice Gray himself confirmed this: 'Evidence from welfare officers confirmed that the usual practice was for contact to be maintained between natural family and child after removal.'[57] The policies and procedures for parental contact at the time of Bruce's removal were as follows:

Whether children were in foster homes or institutions, natural parents could visit them on request and then ask for them to be returned. The visits were supervised, particularly for the first time, and took place at the office of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. In some cases, however, these contacts could not be readily arranged. As one officer, Barbara Weisert, explained, 'the Aboriginal people were itinerant and it was often very difficult to contact the natural families.' Whether visits could be made often depended on the effort made by the welfare officers to maintain continuity of contact. Another welfare officer, Brian Bennett, said the department encouraged the natural mothers of Aboriginal children to visit their children who had been placed in foster homes. He understood departmental policy was to return Aboriginal children to their natural parents where possible. Sometimes conditions would be imposed, such as the standard of the family's living conditions or the husband's employment and behaviour. Bennett said if a child was not returned because of unsatisfactory circumstances, the department tried to assist the natural parents to improve their living conditions.[58]

In the case of Bruce Trevorrow's family, this occurred when the department provided his mother with a house at Victor Harbor in 1965. Once she had settled there, without her alcoholic and violent husband Cyril, the department arranged for Bruce, aged ten, to meet

[55] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, paras 324–5
[56] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, para 327
[57] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, para 144
[58] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, paras 728–31



South Australia 1920–1960, showing locations of Aboriginal settlements missions and other places mentioned in text.

her in Adelaide in September 1966, then to visit her at Victor Harbor in January 1967, and then to return to live with her permanently in May 1967. This was not a procedure that fitted in any way the account by Peter Read and *Bringing Them Home* about how stolen children were supposedly treated. In other words, despite everything, Bruce Trevorrow could not be accurately labelled one of the Stolen Generations.

THE LEGAL STATUS OF CHILD REMOVAL IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

As I noted earlier, there was one issue in the Trevorrow case that virtually guaranteed from the outset that the judge would find in his favour: the fact that the actions of the Aborigines Protection Board in placing Bruce in foster care without his parents' consent was actually illegal at the time. This was not some technical glitch in the law discovered long after the event by the scrutiny of a judge or lawyers. At

the time, the legal prohibition on acting this way was well known to the secretary of the Aborigines Protection Board and to the welfare officers in the front line, including Marjory Angas and at least two others in the same position who gave evidence in the Trevorrow case. Joan Malone said it was 'her understanding that the Aborigines Department could not remove a child without the involvement of the Children's Welfare Department'.[59] Under cross-examination in court, Brian Bennett said: 'I don't believe that I, at any time during my career as a welfare officer, had the power to remove an Aboriginal child from its parents.'[60]

In fact, the Aborigines Protection Board had long had an opinion from the Crown Solicitor to that effect. He said in 1949 that, under the prevailing Aborigines Act 1934–1929, the powers of the board 'are of a general nature and of themselves are not, in my opinion, specific enough to authorize the removal of aboriginal children from their parents'.[61] If the Aborigines Protection Board thought a child should be removed from its parents it had to present its case to the Children's Welfare and Public Relief Board, later known as the Children's Welfare Department. That organization alone had the power to forcibly remove children of any racial or ethnic background, as long as it could persuade a Children's Court judge or magistrate that the separation was in the child's best interests.

Of all the Australian states and territories, South Australia was always the most reluctant to remove children from their parents, whether Aboriginal or not. In the period from 1910 to 1970, which *Bringing Them Home* defined as the decades of genocide, South Australia passed a series of laws that made it very difficult for anyone to argue that the government had any intention of stealing Aboriginal children. The relevant legal milestones were as follows:

Aborigines Act 1911: This was the first legislation in South Australia to deal solely with Aboriginal people since Ordinance No 12 of 1844. It established an Aborigines Department and reserves for Aboriginal people. It empowered the Chief Protector to keep any Aboriginal person on a reserve. It aimed to prevent the racial dilution of full-blood people by enforcing segregation, especially of black women from white men. It forbade prostitution and the supply of Aborigines with alcohol.

The 1911 Act made the Chief Protector the legal guardian of all the state's full-blood and half-caste children until they were 21 years old. However, it did not override the provisions of the State Chil-

[59] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, para 718
[60] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, para 77
[61] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, paras 40–1

dren's Act of 1895, which gave the State Children's Council sole responsibility for the forcible removal of children, white or black, from their parents. The concept of 'legal guardianship' in South Australia meant no more than the Chief Protector was responsible for protecting Aboriginal children from harm. He did not have *in loco parentis* powers.[62] 'So far as can be ascertained,' said a South Australian government report produced in 1997 for submission to the Human Rights Commission, the 1911 Aborigines Act 'was not used by itself to authorize the removal of children from their parents.'[63]

The State's Children's Act of 1895 provided that a neglected or destitute child of any race could be sent to an institution, but only by order of a court. However, despite the fact that the State Children's Council had agreed to take charge of the children of mixed descent found wandering or camping with Aboriginal people, and that legal precedents had been established, courts often refused to commit such children into care. In introducing the bill for the 1911 Act, the South Australian Premier described how reluctant his government was to override the wishes of Aboriginal parents:

> There has been much correspondence recently regarding the control of very young half-caste children, and action was being taken to bring most of them who were habitually with the natives in their camp under the control of the State Children's Department. The council of that department quite concurred in such a policy. A strong protest, however, came from the native parents, who begged to be allowed to keep their very young children, because they were fond of them and would take every care of them. It was decided a few months ago to comply in many cases with the native mothers' desire, and only absolutely neglected children were being taken to the State Children's Department. The question was, however, still under consideration awaiting the passing of this Bill.[64]

In fact, this question, as the case of Bruce Trevorrow revealed, was never fully resolved. Neither the Chief Protector nor his successors ever gained the legal authority to act independently of the state's child welfare authority and remove children in their own right.

Between 1895 and 1914, 54 half-caste Aboriginal children had been committed to the care of the State Children's Council. According to the Council's 1915 Annual Report, 48 were placed with white families in rural or suburban homes, two were in the Industrial School, three in the Girls' Probationary School, and one in

[62] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, paras 439–50
[63] South Australian Government, *A Brief History of the Laws, Policies and Practices in South Australia which Led to the Removal of Many Aboriginal Children*, Family and Community Services, Adelaide, 1997, p 8
[64] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, paras 338, 341

the Lying-In Home for pregnant girls at Magill.[65] However, there were no other indicators of how many Aboriginal children were taken into care during the life of the Council from 1895 to 1927 because its records did not specifically identify children by race or ethnicity. As a result, said the state government's 1997 submission, it is now 'virtually impossible' to determine how many Aboriginal children were removed from their families in this period.[66]

Apart from the creation of Aboriginal reserves in several parts of the state, one of the few other consequences of the 1911 Act was the change in status of two old missions at Point Macleay (established 1859 on Lake Alexandrina, near the Coorong) and Point Pearce (established 1868 on the Yorke Peninsula). The state made both of them 'government stations', following the New South Wales example of creating settlements for welfare dependent Aboriginal people.[67] However, not even on government stations did the state gain the authority to remove children without their parents' consent. Parents had to be consulted on all issues concerning their children and their decision was final. One demonstration of this was an event in 1919 described in a note from the superintendent of the Point Pearce Station, Francis Garnett, to the Chief Protector:

> I have the honour to report in reply to yours of the 22nd instant re establishment of a Boarding School for Aboriginal children somewhere near Adelaide.— I have submitted the suggested scheme to the parents of this Station, fully explaining the advantages to them and their children. In order to give them time to think the matter over, a meeting was held on Friday evening, 24th instant, and a final meeting last night. I regret to report that the parents were all opposed to the scheme. Not one would vote in its favour. I did not submit or suggest any alternative scheme to them. I respectfully submit, however, that the next best scheme be adopted. That is that a Boarding School be erected on both Point Pearce and Point McLeay Stations for reasons already given.[68]

Aborigines (Half-Caste Children) Bill 1921: This bill was designed to overcome the problem of the courts' reluctance to commit Aboriginal

[65] cited by Cameron Raynes, *The Last Protector: The Illegal Removal of Aboriginal Children From Their Parents in South Australia*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 2009, pp 3–4

[66] South Australian Government, *A Brief History of the Laws, Policies and Practices*, p 12

[67] South Australian Government, *A Brief History of the Laws, Policies and Practices*, pp 8–9

[68] Garnett to Chief Protector, 28 January 1919, cited by Cameron Raynes, *A Little Flour and a Few Blankets: An Administrative History of Aboriginal Affairs in South Australia, 1834–2000*, State Records of South Australia, Adelaide, 2002, p 42

children to the State Children's Council's care against the wishes of their parents. It allowed the transfer of control of an Aboriginal child under eighteen from the nominal guardianship of the Chief Protector to the Council without the need for a court order. All the Chief Protector now required to transfer a child was to sign a form called the 'Transfer of Control'. Both state bodies approved the new arrangement. The head of the Chief Protector's department, the Commissioner of Public Works, told the parliament: 'This measure practically gives us power to take children at any age.'[69]

However, the members of the South Australian parliament did not want to empower its bureaucracy to this extent. Following public opposition, members objected strongly during the bill's second reading debate. John Gunn, a Labor member who would soon become Premier, argued:

> We should not enact legislation which will give the Government arbitrary power to take children away from their parents and make them State children. These people have the same parental feelings and the same love for their children as have white people. We must take that into consideration.[70]

After a lengthy debate, the bill lapsed through lack of support. Commenting on this in his Bruce Trevorrow judgement, Justice Gray said the debate indicated the parliament did not intend to give the Chief Protector such powers.[71]

Aborigines (Training of Children) Act, 1923: The measures proposed in the 1921 Bill were largely enacted two years later. The Aborigines (Training of Children) Act followed the example of New South Wales by proposing four-year apprenticeships for Aboriginal youth. The Act was targeted largely at the children of single mothers dependent either on missions or on the two government stations. The difference between it and the 1921 bill was that, unless the case of neglect was severe, children transferred from the Chief Protector to the State Children's Council had to have reached the school leaving age of fourteen years. During the second reading speech, the state Treasurer and Liberal member for Barossa, William Hague, introduced the bill with these sentiments:

> The dictates of humanity forbid the State to deprive mothers of their infant children in cases where the mothers desire to keep them, even though it were ultimately for the child's benefit. The Bill has been

[69] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, paras 351–3
[70] South Australia, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Assembly, 20 September 1923, p 617
[71] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, paras 355

> designed with these difficulties in view. It embodies a scheme which while making reasonable provision for the training of the children, can hardly be said to be unduly harsh to the mothers of the children concerned.

Hague went on to outline the provisions that were intended to reduce the severity of the 1923 Act in comparison with the 1921 bill:

> No child, if legitimate, may be transferred from the control of the Protector until he or she has turned 14 years of age ... Thus the aboriginal or half-caste parents would have their children with them throughout infancy and early youth ... An illegitimate child may be transferred at any time after the first nine months of its life, but there is no obligation to transfer such a child, and the provision in the Bill is designed only to be used in cases where an illegitimate child is ill-cared for by its parents. Inspectresses from the State Children's Department visit the aboriginal stations regularly and could ascertain what illegitimate infants could properly be removed.[72]

Quoting this speech in his judgement in the Bruce Trevorrow case, Justice Gray said it demonstrated how strictly the parliament wanted to limit the Chief Protector's powers of removal:

> The second reading speech for this Act, considered in light of the grave concerns expressed during the debate about the 1921 Bill, supports the conclusion that Parliament did not intend the Chief Protector to have power to remove children from their parents outside the provisions of the *Aborigines (Training of Children) Act*. This view is supported by the Treasurer's introductory remarks that 'the dictates of humanity forbid the State to deprive mothers of their infant children in cases where the mothers desire to keep them' and that 'the Bill has been designed with these difficulties in view'. Parliament's intention was that the Chief Protector could only remove a child from its parents by following the procedure set out in the *Aborigines (Training of Children) Act* — the second reading speech indicates that this was specifically designed to be fair and appropriate for that purpose.[73]

Even so, this Act too was surrounded in controversy and aroused the opposition of Aboriginal people, especially those at Point Macleay and Point Pearce. The state government's 1997 submission observed that 'the continuing protests from Aboriginal people made its administration so problematic that the Chief Protector decided in 1924 effectively to suspend its provisions by not enforcing them.'[74] The submission's authors could not say how long the suspension

[72] South Australia, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Assembly, 20 September 1923, p 617

[73] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, para 360

[74] South Australian Government, *A Brief History of the Laws, Policies and Practices*, p 13

lasted. There were no subsequent records of a South Australian apprenticeship scheme for Aboriginal youth comparable in scale or operation to the one in New South Wales.

The Maintenance Act 1927–1937: This was an Act to consolidate all the state welfare provisions then in operation in South Australia. It applied to both adults and children, whether Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal. It created the Children's Welfare and Public Relief Board. It allowed this board the authority to remove children from their parents if found to be destitute or neglected, but only after the board had satisfied a court that this was so. A child was then defined as a 'state child' and could be held in an institution or in the care of foster parents until it was eighteen years old. The Act included provision for foster care and required foster mothers to be licensed by the board. It permitted parents or guardians to put their own case in court against any application for permanent removal. This Act remained in force until replaced in 1965 by the Social Welfare Act.

The Children's Protection Act 1936: This Act applied to children under sixteen years of age and also included those who were both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. It created a number of new offences about the ill-treatment of children. They included: neglecting to provide sufficient food, clothing and lodging for children; ill-treating, neglecting, abandoning or exposing a child to unnecessary risk, danger, injury or suffering. It allowed a court to authorize a police constable or an officer of the Children's Welfare and Public Relief Board to remove a child to an institution to be detained until it could be brought before the court. In his judgement in the Bruce Trevorrow case, Justice Gray said this Act revealed the state's intention to expeditiously protect children who were neglected or abandoned or reasonably suspected to be so.[75]

The Aborigines Act 1934–1939: This Act created the Aborigines Protection Board and gave it the responsibilities previously held by the Chief Protector. The board became the legal guardian of every Aboriginal child up to the age of 21. This applied even if the child had parents. The board's duty as legal guardian, however, was limited. It was to 'provide, when possible for the custody, maintenance and education of the children of aborigines.' However, the board could only play a role in separation from parents if the child concerned was illegitimate. In the case of neglected and destitute illegitimate children, the Act envisaged the Aborigines Protection Board would work in conjunction with the Children's Welfare and Public Relief Board to remove a child and bring it before a court. In theory, both boards

[75] Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, para 380

had to agree before the removal of the child could be made. Once a court had given approval, the Aborigines Protection Board ceased to be the child's legal guardian and it became a 'state child' under the *Maintenance Act* and became the responsibility of the Children's Welfare and Public Relief Board. It was anything but a simple system.

However, the expectation of cooperation between the two agencies was not fulfilled. In fact, they remained in a position of virtual stalemate. The Children's Welfare and Public Relief Board refused to pursue the removal of neglected Aboriginal children and would not agree to accept them as state children. It only accepted responsibility for white children. It told the Aborigines Protection Board that if it wanted to remove Aboriginal children it should go to the government and get the required legislation in its own right. The result was the position described earlier in which the state's Crown Solicitor advised the Aborigines Protection Board it could not legally remove children itself. The Children's Welfare and Public Relief Board made it clear it took its stand on the rights of the child and its parents to a court hearing. In October 1960, it stated:

> The Children's Welfare and Public Relief Board is not in favour of acting administratively with the Aborigines Protection Board to make an aboriginal child a State child, although this is provided for in the Aborigines Act, because there would usually be objection from the child or his relatives, and the Children's Welfare and Public Relief Board prefers, in such cases, that a Court should decide whether the liberty of the individual should be restricted.[76]

This board's long-standing objection to handling Aboriginal children derived from its view of the difference between half-caste children who lived among white people and the children of full-blood Aborigines in the state's remote desert regions who still lived traditional lives. It wanted the former to be treated the same as white children and the latter to be the exclusive responsibility of the Aborigines Protection Board. It explained:

> The Children's Welfare and Public Relief Board is still of opinion that aboriginal children living a tribal life should be dealt with by the Aborigines Protection Board. In cases where aboriginal children are living on aboriginal reserves or in aboriginal institutions, the Children's Welfare and Public Relief Board feels that the Aborigines Protection Board should care for and control them, at least until a Court commits them to a Children's Welfare Department Institution. Where aboriginal children are not living under primitive conditions or in aboriginal reserves, they may reasonably be dealt with in the same way as white children in similar circumstances. Where aboriginal children have been living as members of

[76] quoted in Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, para 73

> the community there is less difficulty in their adjustment to life with white children in Children's Welfare Department Institutions. Where, however, aboriginal children have been living primitively, it is to their own disadvantage to be placed precipitately in an all-white environment.[77]

The impasse between the agencies, which lasted from 1939 until 1960, meant the Aborigines Protection Board did not have the authority to remove children on its own, even if it regarded a child as severely neglected or malnourished. However, some officers of the board took it upon themselves to act illegally in these cases. Over this period, the number of Aboriginal children removed this way amounted to 300.

Documentary evidence for this was provided in the Bruce Trevorrow case, which turned up a letter written on 16 October 1958 by the Secretary of the Aborigines Protection Board to his counterpart in Victoria, the Superintendent of Aborigines Welfare, who had enquired about policies and practices for Aboriginal children in South Australia. The secretary replied:

> There is not a high proportion of aboriginal children who are wards of the State, simply because our legislation does not provide that neglected children can be removed from their parents, except by transfer to the Children's Welfare and Public Relief Board who in any case, will not accept them. At the present time, although I would ask you to treat this as confidential, a Bill is in the course of preparation whereby it is hoped that the Board will have authority to charge children as neglected and commit them to homes and institutions. Again in confidence, for some years without legal authority, the Board have taken charge of many aboriginal children, some are placed in Aboriginal Institutions, which by the way I very much dislike, and others are placed with foster parents, all at the cost of the Board. At the present time I think there are approximately 300 children so placed, and the cost of maintaining these children during this financial year will be over £30,000. As often as possible we arrange for this type of child to be adopted, necessarily of course, with the authority of the parents.[78]

Among the 300 children placed in the kind of institutions described by the secretary were those in the little network of South Australia's child welfare homes for Aboriginal children. In 1956, that network and the numbers of children who lived there, is listed in Table 12.1.

[77] quoted in Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, para 73
[78] quoted in Gray J, *Trevorrow v. South Australia*, 1 August 2007, para 74

TABLE 12.1: ABORIGINAL CHILDREN IN INSTITUTIONS, SOUTH AUSTRALIA, 1956

Institution	*Number of children*
Koonibba Lutheran Children's Home	33
Umeewarra Children's Home	47
Colebrook Home (United Aborigines Mission)	19
Gerard Mission Home (United Aborigines Mission)	5
Mount Barker Salvation Army Home	14
Tanderra Home (United Aborigines Mission)	9
Other homes and institutions	27
Total	154

Source: South Australian Government, *A Brief History of the Laws, Policies and Practices in South Australia which Led to the Removal of Many Aboriginal Children*, Family and Community Services, 1997, p 15. In this publication, the total number of children is wrongly totalled as 186.

This, then, was the legal and institutional environment that obtained in January 1958 when Bruce Trevorrow was given to the foster family of Martha Davies. In South Australia, a transfer of this kind could only have been made legally with the consent of the natural parents. Even though, in retrospect, it absolved the South Australian parliament of any charge of being responsible for a local version of the Stolen Generations, it was hardly a situation that deserved any acclaim. If a child was white and neglected, it could go before a court for a judge or magistrate to determine the outcome, but if a child was Aboriginal and neglected, the child welfare authorities had no legal option that would allow them to come to its aid.

The Aboriginal Affairs Act 1962: Under this Act, which came into operation in February 1963, the Aborigines Protection Board was replaced by the Aboriginal Affairs Board, which had even fewer powers than its predecessor. By this time, however, the stand-off between the two agencies had been resolved. Aboriginal children could now be fostered out by order of a court or by consent of the parents. This Act also abolished the board's power to remove Aborigines to reserves and most other restrictions on their actions. The idea of protection or guardianship for Aborigines was over, both officially and

practically. As the South Australian government submission of 1997 observed:

> The 1962 Act virtually ended the practice of removing Aboriginal children without legal action under the Maintenance Act or Social Welfare Act. There are only a handful of actions to remove Aboriginal children under the Aborigines Act recorded in annual reports of the Department of Social Welfare, the last in 1970.[79]

One of the great ironies of the history of Aboriginal child welfare is that the state most reluctant to remove Aboriginal children from their parents turned out to be the only one that did so illegally. Among the 300 children mentioned by the Aborigines Protection Board secretary in 1958 may have been many who were separated with their parents' agreement, but there must be others still alive who were taken in circumstances similar to Bruce Trevorrow. If lawyers can find them, South Australian judges may well find in their favour in future cases. However, that does not mean that any of them automatically confirm the Stolen Generations thesis. As I noted earlier, Bruce Trevorrow was an extreme case, and was only removed by Marjory Angas after a paediatrician at Adelaide Children's Hospital certified he was suffering malnutrition. Given the attitudes and practices of welfare officers in the 1950s, it would be most likely that other children treated the same were in similarly dire straits. Whether other South Australian judges will regard this technical illegality as seriously as Justice Gray may depend largely on the personal histories of the children themselves.

THE ABSENCE OF STOLEN CHILDREN IN QUEENSLAND

Perversely, the legal system in Queensland, which until the 1970s seemed the most oppressive for all the Aboriginal people who came within its jurisdiction, was the one that impinged least on Aboriginal children. The state created no separate institutions for Aboriginal children. It was least interested in removing them from the fringe camps and shanty towns, the least concerned about the sexual fate of half-caste girls, the most hostile to the notion of assimilation, the most critical of proposals to 'breed out the colour' and yet the most loathed by those who saw themselves as Aboriginal policy 'progressives'.

Queensland removed far fewer children from their parents than any of the other states, except Tasmania. In the period from 1908 to 1971, the Queensland government placed 8912 Aboriginal men, women and children in government reserves, missions and other state

[79] South Australian Government, *A Brief History of the Laws, Policies and Practices*, p 16

institutions. Included in this figure were 2024 children. Yet only 249 of these children were unaccompanied by adults. They meant just 2.8 per cent of the Aboriginal people moved to reserves over 63 years were separated from their parents. The rate was less than four separations a year. These figures were calculated by the Queensland government from its own records and submitted in 1996 to the Human Rights Commission inquiry into the Stolen Generations.[80]

Since then, at least one true believer in the Stolen Generations thesis has gone through the same records to try to make the total look bigger. In 2005, Mark Copland submitted a PhD thesis to Griffith University in which he counted both nineteenth- and twentieth-century removals in Queensland. He said that from 1859 to 1971 a total of 660 unaccompanied Aboriginal children were removed to institutions.[81] However, to get that figure he not only extended the time frame by forty years but also included 'removal' to mean children placed in dormitories on the same missions where their parents were located.

As I have documented in Chapters Eight and Nine, most dormitories for children on government stations and missions in northern Australia were not fully segregated from the parents' quarters. The children slept and ate apart but saw their parents most days. There were a small number of institutions that did use dormitories to enforce a fairly strict regime of segregation, especially the Anglican missions at Yarrabah in North Queensland and Forrest River in the Kimberley district of Western Australia, but is it wrong to assume the majority of children's dormitories were of this kind. Any total that automatically counts children in dormitories as 'removed' or 'stolen' should be treated as suspect.

Nonetheless, even if Copland's figure of 660 children removed from parents over 112 years were to be accepted as accurate, it still left Queensland with the lowest removal rate of all the states, less than six children a year. Given that Queensland was the second most

[80] Queensland Government, *Interim Submission to National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children From Their Families*, April 1996, pp 33–7. The figure of 249 unaccompanied children was quoted by Anna Haebich, *Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families 1800–2000, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 2000*, p 174, from what she called the 'typescript' version of the Queensland government's interim submission. In the printed version of the interim submission held by the Sydney office of the Human Rights Commission, that figure is omitted, though the other numbers discussed here are still provided.

[81] Mark Copland, Calculating Lives: The Numbers and Narratives of Forced Removals in Queensland 1859–1972, PhD Thesis, School of Art, Media and Culture, Griffith University, 2005, p 305

populous state for Aborigines after Western Australia, such a small proportion is a good indicator of how little intention the state authorities had to separate children from their parents.

The Queensland government submission gave a selected list of extracts why children were sent to reserves between 1937 and 1941. A random sample of record cards from that period gave the following reasons for the removal of children:

- to accompany parents
- conduct has not been good
- transferred from the care of the State Children Department
- only eleven years of age and both parents are dead
- to accompany her father
- neglected children
- to join parents
- for their own benefit
- care and education
- parents dead — to be looked after and to receive schooling
- too young to work, to receive schooling.[82]

Apart from the most common reason why children went onto Queensland reserves — to accompany their parents — the remaining reasons were similar to those that applied at the same time in New South Wales: because the children were orphans or neglected, or because there were opportunities for them to go to school. None of this fits the Stolen Generations profile of forcible removals for racist reasons. However, when it discussed Queensland, as elsewhere, *Bringing Them Home* failed to tell its readers that the line it was pushing did not fit the evidence it received from the state governments concerned.

As Chapter Seven has already discussed, Queensland was the state with the strongest commitment to the segregation of Aboriginal people. An Act to Make Provision for the Better Protection and Care of the Aboriginal and Half-Caste Inhabitants of the Colony, and to Make More Effectual Provision for Restricting the Sale and Distribution of Opium received assent in December 1897. The Act and its successors dominated the lives of Aboriginal people for the next seven decades. Queensland rejected the notion that Aboriginal people, particularly those of full descent, could be readily integrated into the expanding white economy and society. Instead, it sought to segregate them on reserves set apart from white communities. It appointed

[82] Queensland Government, *Interim Submission to National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children*, p 38

Protectors to deport large numbers of Aborigines onto the reserves where they could be permanently detained. The Act created an Aborigines Department and a Chief Protector. It divided the state into two administrative regions and appointed a Protector for each division. The Protectors had the right to detain Aboriginal people and control their movements. In particular, they were required to exclude Aborigines from towns and places where alcohol was available and to prevent Aboriginal women from having sexual relations with white men. Although half-castes who lived among whites, especially if married to them, could apply for exemption from the Act, the powers of the authorities to remove others were almost unlimited. There was no need for a court hearing and no appeal against a decision. Charles Rowley described the regime as follows:

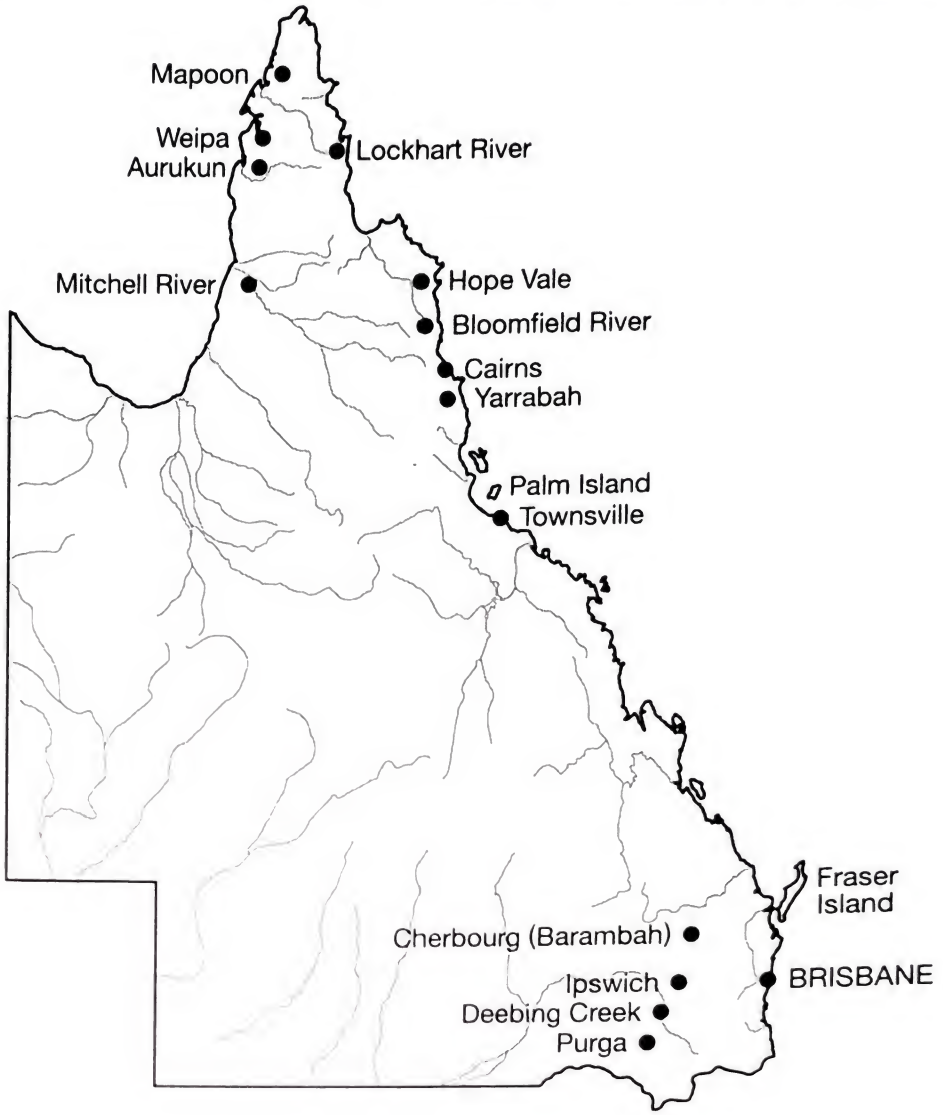
> Queensland now set a new example, by defining in rigid racial terms those who were to be the main concern of the Act — to be directed where to live, to be 'drafted' there where necessary; to be limited to the life of the institution at the will of the official. The special category of persons to whom the Act applied included Aborigines, and half-castes married to or children of Aborigines, or who 'habitually' associated with Aborigines ... Aborigines, by administrative direction and without appeal, could be 'removed to' and kept 'within' the reserve boundaries unless they were lawfully employed or married to white men.[83]

For Aborigines who proved recalcitrant and who refused to be confined to their allocated reserves, in 1918 the state established a place of secondary confinement. Troublemakers were shipped to Palm Island where they joined an estranged community. Others sent there were the unmarried mothers of half-caste children and criminals recently released from prison. Because it was an island, 65 kilometres off the coast from Townsville, escape was very difficult.

The rationale for reducing Aborigines to what was effectively second-class citizen status was to prevent them from being economically exploited in the settled districts and from being subject to violence on the outback frontier. The author of the 1896 report that lay behind the Act, Archibald Meston, was a Queensland journalist who provided a range of anecdotal evidence to support his case. He wanted Aborigines excluded from all itinerant work, which included cane cutting on the Queensland sugar fields, and an 'absolute prohibition' of all Aboriginal labour on the largely Asian-owned fishing boats that collected pearl shell, bêche-de-mer and tortoiseshell, and which paid their indigenous labour in opium dross — the ash left

[83] Charles Rowley, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society: Aboriginal Policy and Practice, Volume One*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1970, p 183

from smoking. Meston said the dross was widely used as a work incentive to addict Aborigines and tie them to an employer. Abori-



Queensland 1900–1970, showing locations of major Aboriginal settlements, religious missions and other places mentioned in text.

gines in permanent employment were not to be removed to reserves but their positions should be registered and their conditions regulated by the state.[84]

As compensation for their loss of economic freedom and confinement to the reserves, Aboriginal people were to be given housing, rations, clothing, schools and medical aid and were to be employed on the reserves raising tropical and sub-tropical crops and stock. In the twentieth century, the government established several sprawling,

[84] *Report on the Aboriginals of Queensland*, Archibald Meston to Home Secretary, *Votes and Proceedings of the Queensland Parliament*, 1896, Vol IV, pp 723 ff, cited by Rowley, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, pp 177–82

segregated communities to house men, women and children. They brought together Aboriginal groups from many districts, some of them traditional enemies. Some settlements were based on old missions, which received additional housing and other facilities. Others were newly created government-run settlements which, according to Rowley, soon developed the classic ills of the institution under authoritarian management and generated the same lack of political concern. According to Charles Rowley: 'Aboriginal administration in these places became an issue as remote as that of gaols or asylums.'[85]

From the mid-nineteenth century until 1906, child welfare provisions for both black and white children had been governed by Queensland's Industrial and Reformatory Schools Act of 1865. This Act included an extraordinary clause that defined as neglected 'any child born of an aboriginal or half-caste mother'.[86] However, the Act required neglect to be established by a court before a child could be removed to an industrial school or reformatory, and no one has found evidence that any child was removed simply because it was born to an Aboriginal mother. An amendment in 1906 dropped the clause. Under the 1865 Act, some of Queensland's Aboriginal missions were declared to be industrial schools. Instead of removing child offenders or neglected Aboriginal children to non-indigenous institutions, they were sent to Aboriginal missions. One former mission redefined like this was at Deebing Creek, near Ipswich, which became the Deebing Creek Industrial School. Aboriginal children from other reformatories were subsequently sent there.[87]

At the same time, however, Queensland police were positively discouraged from recommending the prosecution of Aboriginal children for either neglect or juvenile offences. In the 1880s, an internal directive was issued to all police that no action could be taken to arrest half-caste children without first reporting the matter to the Colonial Secretary.[88]

The 1865 Act was eventually replaced by the State Children Act of 1911. This also applied equally to black and white children and again, rather than allow a child to be removed by arbitrary administrative fiat, it required a court to decide on cases of neglect. This Act remained in force for more than 50 years when it was replaced by the

[85] Rowley, *Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, p 184

[86] cited in Appendix Three, Queensland, *Bringing Them Home*, p 617

[87] Queensland Government, *Interim Submission to National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children*, pp 8–9

[88] Queensland Government, *Interim Submission to National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children*, p 9

Children's Services Act of 1965. Yet again, the new Act contained no particular provisions for Aboriginal children.[89]

The closest Queensland came to creating special powers for the removal of Aboriginal children was the Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Act of 1939 which replaced the Chief Protector with the position of Director of Native Affairs and gave him increased powers. Among them was the provision that the director of Native Affairs be the 'legal guardian of every Aboriginal child under 21'.[90] Recording this in *Bringing Them Home*, the Human Rights Commission took the most radical interpretation, declaring it gave the Director of Native Affairs 'virtually total control of the lives of Indigenous children'.[91] That might have been true in theory, but as the Bruce Trevorrow case in South Australia showed, when tested in court the concept of 'legal guardian' did not mean the state had *in loco parentis* powers over children, even over children on government reserves. In any case, the Human Rights Commission was forced to admit in *Bringing Them Home* that, whatever the particular powers the authorities had over Aboriginal children, very little use was made of them in Queensland since 'families were generally moved together'.[92]

Indeed, in the report's chapter on Queensland, any statistics about the incidence of actual child removal were conspicuous by their absence. Had *Bringing Them Home* done a proper job of fulfilling its terms of reference it would have admitted that the segregationist administration in twentieth-century Queensland, however else one might regard its deprivation of Aboriginal liberties, was not a regime that pursued the separation of Aboriginal children from their parents to any serious extent. Instead, *Bringing Them Home* confined itself to lamenting the powers over Aboriginal people the 1897 Act and its successors gave the state, while omitting to mention the inconvenient truth of how small a number of children were actually separated. Had the report been frank with its readers, it would have admitted that the data provided by the state government, which were the only Queensland data it had, proved that no plausible case could be made for the existence in Queensland of anything deserving the name of Stolen Generations.

[89] all these Acts cited in Appendix Three, Queensland, *Bringing Them Home*, pp 618–23

[90] Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Act 1939, cited in Appendix Three, Queensland, *Bringing Them Home*, p 621

[91] *Bringing Them Home*, p 72

[92] *Bringing Them Home*, p 72

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

How many children were separated from parents?

ALTHOUGH the number of Aboriginal children removed was always the critical issue in this whole debate, in its 689-page volume *Bringing Them Home* devoted to the question just a little more than one page. The discussion began with a disclaimer:

> It is not possible to state with any precision how many children were forcibly removed, even if that enquiry is confined to those removed officially. Many records have not survived. Others failed to record the children's Aboriginality. [1]

But only seven paragraphs later, its conclusions were crammed with certainty:

> forcible removal affected every region of Australia ... Nationally we can conclude with confidence that between one in three and one in ten indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families and communities in the period from approximately 1910 until 1970. In certain regions and in certain periods the figure was undoubtedly much greater than one in ten ... Most families have been affected, in one or more generations, by the forcible removal of one or more children.[2]

[1] Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children From Their Families*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, April 1997, p 36

[2] *Bringing Them Home*, p 37

Bringing Them Home made it clear it was not talking about all types of separation. It did not mean any kind of removal. Its discussion was always focused on 'forcible removals'. At the very least, 'forcible removals' were cases where parents, relatives or the children themselves objected to the separation. The meaning of the term excludes all those cases where parents consented to a separation, such as when children were sent away to go to school or hospital, or when parents felt so unable to cope they asked a person or an institution to take care of their children.

As evidence of its conclusion, the Human Rights Commission provided brief accounts of just seven research projects. So brief were they, in fact, that readers gained little idea of the methods used or the reliability of the results. Readers were required to take the report's deductions from them on trust. Unfortunately, it is not difficult to show that little of what *Bringing Them Home* said warranted any trust at all. In particular, its claim that up to one in three Aboriginal children were forcibly removed is bereft of any reliable research support, and some of its assertions about research findings are blatant distortions of the original studies.

The extracts that follow, indented in smaller type, are the *full* text of what the Human Rights Commission wrote on each research project it discussed. My comments on those extracts are in normal sized type. The projects are presented in the same order as in *Bringing Them Home*.

Peter Read, New South Wales, 1981

> Historian Peter Read used official records to number indigenous children removed in New South Wales between 1883 and 1969 at 5625, warning as he did so that some of the record series were incomplete.[3]

Read used *some* official records but *Bringing Them Home* was quite misleading to pretend that his whole count of 5625 removals was based on them. In fact, much less than half his tally doe New South Wales came from official records. As Chapter Two demonstrated, only 2425 of the removals he counted came from official records. Read described the rest of his tallies as 'approximate figures due to lack of records'. Moreover, as Chapter Two argued, none of these estimates were credible. They were replete with exaggeration, double counting, historical error, creative definitions and fanciful guesses. My count, based on a reading of the same records as Read, totalled 2600 Aboriginal children in New South Wales removed between 1912 and 1968 from families for any length of time and for any reason. That is,

[3] *Bringing Them Home*, p 36

the records did not distinguish between the forcible and the voluntary, which means that even 2600 is an overestimate.

It is still worth observing that, even if Read's figure of 5625 were to be accepted, it was a long way short of the 50,000 national total of child removals he has claimed.[4] Given that both Victoria and Tasmania in the twentieth century had very small populations of Aboriginal people, then, to reach Read's total, Western Australia, Queensland, Northern Territory and South Australia would each needed to have made twice as many removals as New South Wales. Given that New South Wales made a far greater expenditure on Aborigines than any other state, Read's numerical assumption is simply not credible.

Colebrook Home records, South Australia, 1927–1981

> South Australian researchers Christobel Mattingly and Ken Hampton found records relating to over 350 children entering Colebrook Home in the 54 years to 1981.[5]

If *Bringing Them Home* thought Colebrook's 350 children in 54 years, an average intake of 6.5 children a year, worth mentioning as a major source of child removal, then it still had a long way to go reach the 50,000 removals for which the Prime Minister apologized. Moreover, the Colebrook records did not say that all these removals were forcible. We know that some were not, especially those of Lois O'Donoghue and her four siblings, who, as Chapter Six shows, were voluntarily surrendered by their father. That chapter recorded some other children at Colebrook were fee-paying residents, supported by their parents who from time to time came to visit them. None of the latter could be said to have been there forcibly.

Ernest Hunter, survey in Kimberley district, Western Australia, late 1980s

> Professor Ernest Hunter surveyed a sample of 600 Aboriginal people in the Kimberley region of WA in the late 1980s. One-quarter of the elderly people and one in seven of the middle-aged people reported having been removed in childhood.[6]

The results of Hunter's Kimberley survey were given by him in verbal evidence. *Bringing Them Home* cited no research paper that discussed the survey's methodology or any substantial details of its results. The two sentences above are all readers know about it. Hunter is a psychiatrist and, from the titles of his publications listed on the University of Queensland website, it is not obvious which of

[4] Peter Read, *A Rape of the Soul So Profound: The Return of the Stolen Generations*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1999, p 26

[5] *Bringing Them Home*, p 36

[6] *Bringing Them Home*, p 36

his published works, if any, record the results of his Kimberley survey. *Bringing Them Home* provided no indication of what 'removed in childhood' actually meant. Did it mean removed from all family members, both parents, one parent only, the local community? There was no indication of who did the removing, where the children went, or how long a period the term 'removed' signified. Nor was there any indication of whether the removals were voluntarily — to go to school or hospital — or forcible — to go to prison or to a child welfare institution. This was not a proper way for any commission of inquiry to present research findings. These unanswered questions were important, especially given Hunter's own frank commitment to the political use of academic scholarship and his belief that the mental health of Aboriginal youth needed 'psychiatric engagement at a political level'.[7] Moreover, after its treatment of the survey by Max Kamien, discussed below, no one should have any faith in *Bringing Them Home*'s ability to report Hunter's research accurately without seeing the author's own published work on the subject.

Max Kamien, Bourke, New South Wales, 1970s

> Dr Max Kamien surveyed 320 adults in Bourke in the 1970s. One in every three reported having been separated from their families in childhood for five or more years.[8]

The above passage is the full text of what the Human Rights Commission said about this study. It was a serious misrepresentation of Kamien's findings. One in three of those surveyed by Kamien did *not* say they had been 'separated from their families'. Kamien's original publication, *The Dark People of Bourke* (1978), recorded that while about one in three of those surveyed had been separated from *one* parent for more than five years, the proportion separated from *both* parents was only 5 per cent for males and 7 per cent for females. Moreover, very few of the separations Kamien observed were forcible. Most occurred simply because the father was away working. The most common reason why children left the family was to go to hospital. Here is how Kamien himself reported his findings in Bourke:

> Separation from their families was a common occurrence in the early life history of Aboriginal children in this area. Between the age of 5 and 14 years 34 per cent of the 320 adult males and females interviewed had experienced the absence of one parent for more than five years. Absence of both parents for the same time period was recorded in 5 per cent of males and 7 per cent of females.

[7] E. Hunter, '"Freedom's just another word": Aboriginal Youth and Mental Health', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 29, 3, 1995, p 374
[8] *Bringing Them Home*, p 36

> During the period that I was resident in Bourke the main causes of separation were due to the father pursuing itinerant work on grazing, fruit and cotton growing properties, and lesser periods spent in gaol, usually as a result of drunkenness. Ten boys and fifteen girls under school leaving age were also separated from their families by admission to either gaol or reformatories. The most common cause of separation, however, was hospitalization. A survey of admissions of children under the age of five years to the Bourke District Hospital showed that 72 per cent of children were admitted on at least one occasion in the twelve months under survey (1971–1972). Of these 16 per cent were admitted on more than four occasions.[9]

Kamien found only nine people, three men and six women, whose removal was possibly forcible. He said they 'had spent most of their youth in child welfare institutions after having been declared neglected because their parents were chronic alcoholics'.[10] These nine people accounted for just 2.8 per cent of his sample. In other words, instead of one in three of the sample being stolen children, only one in 36 were child welfare cases and they were removed for good reasons.[11]

Jane McKendrick, Victoria, late 1980s

> Dr Jane McKendrick's findings are almost identical. She surveyed Victorian Aboriginal general medical practice patients in the late 1980s, 30 per cent of whom reported having been removed: 20 per cent to children's homes and another 10 per cent to foster and adoptive families.[12]

In this case, *Bringing Them Home* accurately reported the proportion of removals but misreported the nature of the sample. The paper by Jane McKendrick and four others was published in the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* in 1992. It found that 34 per cent of the sample reported being separated from their families by welfare agencies, with 20 per cent going to children's homes and 10 per cent being adopted or fostered by non-indigenous families. However, the sample did *not* come from 'Aboriginal general medical practice

[9] Max Kamien, *The Dark People of Bourke: A Study of Planned Social Change*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, and Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1978, p 169

[10] Kamien, *The Dark People of Bourke*, p 170

[11] *Bringing Them Home* may not have even consulted the book in which Max Kamien reported his results. It cited not Kamien as its source but a 1995 article by the psychiatrist Ernest Hunter, which purported to be a literature review of the topic of the mental health of Aboriginal youth. Hunter himself also made the false allegation that Kamien's survey of the 'separation from parents' of 320 adults found 'one third had been separated during childhood for more than five years': Hunter, 'Freedom's Just Another Word', p 378

[12] *Bringing Them Home*, p 36

patients' in Victoria. It came from the patients of only *one* general practitioner employed by the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service in the inner Melbourne suburb of Fitzroy. The size of the sample was just 112 people — 48 men and 64 women.[13] This was a welfare-based medical practice for very poor Aboriginal people, whose clientele was over-represented in certain areas. Some 27 per cent of men in the sample were unemployed (and most of the rest employed by Aboriginal community organizations), and 33 per cent of women were on the supporting parents' pension. No less than 54 per cent of the sample had a psychiatric disorder and another 16 per cent showed at least ten psychiatric symptoms — that is, 70 per cent of those interviewed had measurable psychiatric symptoms.[14] In other words, the sample was biased towards welfare dependent and mentally disturbed people who, in their childhood, would have been very likely to have a higher than normal personal history of contact with child welfare agencies. It was not surprising that childhood removals were common in such a group, but this did not mean they were typical of all Aboriginal people. The survey was not reliable evidence of a general removal rate of one-in-three.

National Aboriginal Health Strategy report, 1989

> A national survey of Indigenous health in 1989 found that almost one-half (47 per cent) of Aboriginal respondents of all ages had been separated from both parents in childhood. This very high proportion, which contrasted with a figure of only 7 per cent for non-Indigenous people, must be read with some caution. Separation here includes hospitalization and juvenile detention in addition to removal. It may also include living with family members other than parents for a period.[15]

On its own admission, *Bringing Them Home* should not have used this survey to shore up its estimates. Children separated from their parents to be sent to hospital or to juvenile detention, or who are living with other family members, cannot reasonably be regarded by anyone as stolen. Moreover, the research quoted here may not even exist. The source of this 'finding' was not a national survey conducted by the National Aboriginal Health Strategy Working Party in 1989, as *Bringing Them Home* indicated. Instead, it was a survey conducted by

[13] Jane McKendrick, Trevor Cutter, Alan Mackenzie, and Edmond Chiu, 'The Pattern of Psychiatric Morbidity in a Victorian Urban Aboriginal General Practice Population', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 26, 1992, pp 40, 43. Again, *Bringing Them Home* did not cite this paper directly. It attributed its own source to a citation by Hunter from 'Freedom's Just Another Word'.

[14] McKendrick *et al*, 'The Pattern of Psychiatric Morbidity', p 45

[15] *Bringing Them Home*, p 37

another organization. The Working Party was simply reporting what that other organization said. In its discussion of domestic violence, the Working Party wrote: 'In one survey (VAHS 1986) 65 per cent of respondents had been separated from a parent during childhood (for non-Aboriginal people the rate is 29 per cent) and 47 per cent had been separated from both parents (for non-Aboriginal people the rate is 7 per cent).'[16] In other words, the authors of *Bringing Them Home* did not see the survey they quoted but relied upon the Working Party as a reliable source. On its own, this was unprofessional practice but it also turned out this reference was suspect. In 2000, when Commonwealth public servants prepared a response to *Bringing Them Home* for the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Senator John Herron, it could not find the so-called 'VAHS 1986' survey. 'Commonwealth officials have not been able to locate the original source of this statement,' Senator Herron observed. 'The reference is hardly an authoritative finding.'[17]

Australian Bureau of Statistics survey, 1994

> The 1994 Australian Bureau of Statistics survey of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders revealed 10 per cent of people aged 25 and above had been removed in childhood. Such surveys cannot capture the experiences of those people whose Aboriginality is now unknown even to themselves.[18]

This was the only one of *Bringing Them Home*'s seven sources whose findings it did not distort. In this case, however, the misrepresentation was by omission.

The survey was methodologically sound in that it took a random sample of 5000 Aboriginal households containing 17,500 individuals. Its finding was that 10.2 per cent of persons of more than 25 years of age reported being taken away from their 'natural family' during their childhood. The question put by ABS was in two parts:

> 16. Were you taken away from your natural family by a mission, the government or welfare?
> 16a. During the time you were taken away, who brought you up?

However, the survey did not ask any questions about the reasons for the removal or the circumstances in which it took place. *Bringing Them Home* remained silent about the fact that the survey recorded

[16] National Aboriginal Health Strategy Working Party, *A National Aboriginal Health Strategy*, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Canberra, 1989, p 175

[17] Senator John Herron, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Federal Government Submission to Senate Legal and Constitutional References Committee, Inquiry Into the Stolen Generation, March 2000, p 60

[18] *Bringing Them Home*, p 37

removals made for any reason at all. A Commonwealth Government submission to a Senate inquiry in 2000 observed:

> This means that the figure of 10.2 per cent would include the removal of children across the broadest range of circumstances, both voluntary and involuntary of various kinds, having been removed for whatever reason (good or bad) and under whatever circumstances (forcibly or with consent).[19]

Hence included in these of removals would have been children who spent extended periods in hospital, and those sent to board at government or mission schools and hostels with their parents' consent. As Chapters Nine and Ten recorded, the latter practice was common in the Northern Territory, the far north of Western Australia and other remote outback regions. In short, *Bringing Them Home* was yet again being deceptive when it presented this survey as a measure of the number of *forcible* removals.

HOW MANY 'FORCIBLE REMOVALS' IN AUSTRALIA?

> We can never know the exact number of children of Aboriginal descent removed from their families in Western Australia.
>
> — Anna Haebich, *Broken Circles*, 2000[20]

> It is now virtually impossible to determine how many Aboriginal children were removed from their families during the assimilation era.
>
> — South Australian Government, *A Brief History of the Laws, Policies and Practices in South Australia which led to the Removal of Many Aboriginal Children*, 1997 [21]

Rather than emulate the Human Rights Commission and pronounce 'with confidence' how many children were in the Stolen Generations, most investigators have been more circumspect and have shied from a specific figure. The conspicuous exceptions have been Prime Minister Rudd, the SBS television series *First Australians*, and historian Peter Read, who have each supported a total of 50,000 stolen children. None of them have backed their figure with any solid evidence that could be analysed for its accuracy, or even a methodology that could be debated for its relevance. The total is just a guess.

[19] Herron, Federal Government Submission to Senate Legal and Constitutional References Committee, Inquiry Into the Stolen Generation, p 58

[20] Haebich, *Broken Circles*, p 228

[21] South Australian Government (writer Andrew Hall), *A Brief History of the Laws, Policies and Practices in South Australia Which Led to the Removal of Many Aboriginal Children*, Family and Community Services, South Australia, Adelaide, 1997, p 12

TABLE 13.1: APPROXIMATE NUMBERS OF ABORIGINAL CHILDREN TAKEN INTO CARE, AUSTRALIA, 1880–1970

State or territory	*Approximate period*	*Approximate number of Aboriginal children in care*
New South Wales	1880–1969	2600
Victoria	1890–1970	700
Queensland	1908–1971	250
South Australia	1900–1970	1100
Western Australia	1900–1950	2500
Northern Territory	1910–1970	1000
Tasmania	1900–1970	100
Total		8250

Sources: Tables and estimates compiled from earlier chapters of this book.

On a topic of this kind, however, where the total number is a matter of great public interest, historians have a responsibility to produce their best numerical case, make public the reasoning behind it, and thus put the onus on critics to show if and where they are wrong. Throughout this book, I have examined as many of the available records as possible and offered a tally of the likely numbers in each of the institutions that produced them. I have also given an idea of the scale of removals in each of the states and territories. It is true that none of the data are perfect and that continuous series of statistics are the exception rather than the rule. Estimates occur at many places along the way. Nonetheless, to have avoided the total number would have been an evasion.

I will now draw together the data earlier chapters have produced. Table 13.1 presents my estimates of the number of Aboriginal children taken into care by the various institutions of government, church and charitable organizations that assumed this responsibility from end of the nineteenth century to about 1970 — although in some cases the time series data only go to the Second World War. The numbers are not minimums but are the best estimates I could make from available data. They include estimates of children fostered or adopted into non-indigenous families. The children counted include those separated from their parents for good reasons and bad, and forcibly and voluntarily. Some went with their parents' consent to hostels, missions and homes to be educated and trained; others

were taken from parents who neglected and abused them. Table 13.1 presents both state and territory estimates and the national total. The total of 8250 Aboriginal children taken into some form of extended care represented 5.2 per cent of the Aboriginal population at the 1976 census of 160,000.

Let me emphasize that the estimates in Table 13.1 are *not* a record of the numbers of the Stolen Generations. As I have demonstrated throughout this book, no state or territory in Australia ever wanted to steal Aboriginal children from their parents in order to eliminate the race or to put an end to Aboriginality. No Aboriginal children were removed as part of an agenda driven by racism or genocide. There were *no* Stolen Generations.

The totals presented here and the proportion of the population they represent are much lower figures than others have claimed. They confirm another theme of this book. Rather than being over-zealous in their removal of children, most states and territories did not do nearly enough, especially in the period from Federation to the Second World War. There were many more Aboriginal children who should have been removed on grounds of health and welfare, or who would have benefited from an education away from their immediate surroundings, than governments were willing to fund.

Our one genuine national shame is that this is still the case today, although the reason now lies not in government parsimony but in the demonstrable failure of the policy of self-determination that has prevailed over the past four decades. Aboriginal children are Australian citizens. They deserve nothing less than the same opportunities provided for all other children in this country. Most of the people discussed in this book who worked in Aboriginal child welfare in the twentieth century thought the same. We should not apologize for their actions. For the most part, they did the right thing, both according to their own moral values and the best interests of the children and families they served.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS: ARCHIVE AND GOVERNMENT SOURCES

Aboriginal Mission Stations at Warangesda and Maloga: Report and Correspondence respecting Inquiry into and Working of, P. G. King and E. Fosbery to the Colonial Secretary, 8 August 1882, New South Wales Legislative Council, 1883, in *Votes and Proceedings of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly*, 1883

Aboriginal Welfare: Initial Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities Held at Canberra, 21st to 23rd April 1937, Government Printer, Canberra, 1937

Aborigines Protection Association, *Our Black Brethren: Their Past, Present and Future*, Annual Report, Sydney, 1892; *Black but Comely, being the Annual Report of the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Association, 1892*

Aborigines Protection Board, Annual Reports in *Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales*, 1884–1909, in *Joint Parliamentary Papers of the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council of New South Wales*, 1909–39

Aborigines Protection Board, Minutes of meetings, 1910–40, State Archives of New South Wales, Sydney

Aborigines Protection: Report and Recommendations of the Public Service Board of New South Wales, Government Printer, Sydney, April 1940

Aborigines, Report of the Protector to 31 December 1882, Report to Legislative Council, in *Votes and Proceedings, Legislative Assembly of New South Wales*, 1883

Aborigines Welfare Board, Annual Reports, in *Joint Parliamentary Papers of the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council of New South Wales*, 1940–1968

Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines, Government Printer, Perth, 1899–1936

Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs, Government Printer, Perth, 1937–48

Bleakley, J. W., *The Aboriginals and Half-Castes of Central Australia and North Australia*, Commonwealth Government, Melbourne, 1928

Board for the Protection of the Aborigines, *Report, 1883–4*, in *Votes and Proceedings, Legislative Council of New South Wales*, 1883

Hill, Richard, and George Thornton, *Notes on the Aborigines of New South Wales: with personal reminiscences of the tribes formerly living in the neighbourhood of Sydney and the surrounding districts*, Government Printer, Sydney, 1892

Histories of Girls and Boys Unattached and for Whom Forms Have Not Been Prepared, Living Independent of Board or Placed in Institutions such as Mental Hospitals etc., State Archives of New South Wales, CGS 28 (Kingswood 4/8557)

Matthews, Daniel, *Reports of the Maloga Aboriginal Mission School, Murray River, New South Wales*, Echuca, 1879–88

Mixed marriages, documents collected by National Archives of Australia, Commonwealth Records Series, Department of the Interior file A659/1, 1940/1/408

Moseley, Henry Doyle, *Report of the Royal Commissioner Appointed to Investigate, Report, and Advise Upon Matters in Relation to the Condition and Treatment of Aborigines*, Government Printer, Perth, 1935

Native Administration, *The Acts of the Parliament of Western Australia*, 6 August–11 December 1936

Northern Territory, *Reports of the Administrator/Administration*, 1912–46

Northern Territory, *Reports for the Period*, 1951–1955

Proceedings of the Select Committee on Administration of the Aborigines Protection Board, Government Printer, Sydney, 13 July 1938

Report on the Aboriginals of Queensland, Archibald Meston to Home Secretary H. Tozer, in *Votes and Proceedings of the Parliament of Queensland*, 1896, Vol. IV

Report on the Church and School Establishments by Archdeacon Scott, 1 May 1826, *Historical Records of Australia*, Series I, Vol. XXII

Roth, Walter Edmund, *Report of the Royal Commission on the Condition of the Natives, Western Australia, 1905*, in *Votes and Proceedings of the Parliament*, Western Australia, Second Session, Fifth Parliament, 1905

Select Committee on Administration of Aborigines Protection Board, Minutes of evidence, New South Wales Legislative Assembly, 16 December 1937

Spencer, Walter Baldwin, *Preliminary Report on the Aboriginals of the Northern Territory*, 20 May 1913, included in Northern Territory of Australia, *Report of the Administrator for the Year 1912*

State Children's Relief Board of New South Wales, *Report of the President*, 1884–86

Stuart, Alexander, *Protection of the Aborigines*, minute of the Colonial Secretary, 26 February 1883, in *Votes and Proceedings, Legislative Assembly of New South Wales*, 1883

Ward Registers, 18 January 1916 to 7 December 1928, CGS 26 (4/8553–54; SR reel 2793), State Archives of New South Wales, Sydney

Ward Registers, Index to, 1916–c.1938, CGS 27 (4/8555–56, SR Reel 1649), State Archives of New South Wales, Sydney

Western Australia, *An Act to Make Provision for the Better Protection and Care of the Aboriginal Inhabitants of Western Australia*, 14 of 1905

Western Australia, *An Act to Further Amend the Aborigines Act 1905*, 42 of 1911

ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS: BOOKS

Basedow, Herbert, *The Australian Aboriginal*, F. W. Preece and Sons, Adelaide, 1925

Bates, Daisy, *The Native Tribes of Western Australia*, ed. Isobel White, National Library of Australia, Canberra, 1985

Bennett, M. M., *The Australian Aboriginal as a Human Being*, Alston Rivers, London, 1930

Cook, Cecil, *The Epidemiology of Leprosy in Australia: Being the Report of an Investigation in Australia During the Years 1923–1925 Under the Terms of the Wandsworth Research Scholarship of the London School of Tropical Medicine*, Government Printer, Canberra, 1927

Dixon, Retta, *In the Way of His Steps: A Brief History of Three Decades of History of the Aborigines Inland Mission of Australia 1905–1935*, Aborigines Inland Mission, Sydney, 1936

Gunn, Mrs Aeneas, *We of the Never-Never*, (1908), Hutchinson, Melbourne, 1981

Hasluck, Paul, *Native Welfare in Australia*, Paterson Brokensha, Perth, 1953

Howitt, A. W., *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, (1904), Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1996

Neville, A. O., *Australia's Coloured Minority: Its Place in the Community*, Currawong Pubishing, Sydney, 1947

Prichard, Katherine Susannah, *Coonardoo* (1929), A&R Classics, HarperCollins, Sydney, 2002

Telfer, E. J., *Amongst Australian Aborigines: Forty Years of Missionary Work. The Story of the United Aborigines' Mission*, E. J. Telfer, Sydney, 1939

COURT JUDGEMENTS

Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth, O'Loughlin, Maurice J., Federal Court of Australia, FCA 1084, 11 August 2000

Kruger v. Commonwealth ('Stolen Generations case'), High Court of Australia, full bench, HCA 27; (1997) 190 CLR 1; (1997) 146 ALR 126; (1997) 71 ALJR 991 (31 July 1997)

Trevorrow v. State of South Australia, Gray, Thomas J., Supreme Court of South Australia, (No. 5) [2007] SASC 285, 1 August 2007

GOVERNMENT SUBMISSIONS

Herron, John, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, *Federal Government Submission to Senate Legal and Constitutional References Committee, Inquiry Into the Stolen Generation*, March 2000

New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs, *Submission to the Review of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*

Queensland Government, *Interim Submission to National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children From Their Families*, Brisbane, April 1996

South Australian Government, *A Brief History of the Laws, Policies and Practices in South Australia which Led to the Removal of Many Aboriginal Children*, Family and Community Services, Adelaide, 1997

Tasmanian Government, *Submission to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children*, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Hobart, 13 August 1996

Victorian Government, *Interim Submission to the National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children From Their Families*, Melbourne, January 1996

Victorian Government, *Final Submission to the National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children From Their Families*, Parts I and II, Melbourne, August 1996

Victorian Government, *Response to Bringing Them Home: Implementation Status Report*, Melbourne, November 1998

Victorian Government, *Response to the Report of the National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children From Their Families, Bringing Them Home*, Melbourne, November 1997

Victorian Government Response to Bringing Them Home 2002, Melbourne, October 2002

Victorian Stolen Generations Taskforce, *Report to Victorian Government*, Melbourne, April 2003.

BOOKS AND ARTICLES

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence, *Report*, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Development, Brisbane, 2000

Adam-Smith, Patsy, *Moonbird People*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1965

Armitage, Andrew, *Comparing the Policy of Aboriginal Assimilation: Australia, Canada and New Zealand*, UBC Press, Vancouver, 1995

Armstrong, Pauline, *Frank Hardy and the Making of Power Without Glory*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2000

Attwood, Bain, '"Learning About the Truth": The Stolen Generations Narrative', in Bain Attwood and Fiona Magowan, eds, *Telling Stories: Indigenous History and Memory in Australia and New Zealand*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2001

Attwood, Bain, *The Making of the Aborigines*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1989

Attwood, Bain, Winifred Burrage, Alan Burrage and Elsie Stokie, *A Life Together, A Life Apart: A History of Relations Between Europeans and Aborigines*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1994

Attwood, Bain, and Andrew Markus, eds, *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights: A Documentary History*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1999

Austin, A. G., and R. J. W. Selleck, *The Australian Government School, 1830–1914: Select Documents with Commentary*, Pitman, Melbourne, 1975

Austin, Tony, 'Cecil Cook, Scientific Thought and Half-Castes', *Aboriginal History*, 14, 1, 1990

Austin, Tony, *I Can Picture the Old Home So Clearly: The Commonwealth and Half-Caste Youth in the Northern Territory 1911–1939*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1993

Australian Government Productivity Commission, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009*, Melbourne

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Child Protection Australia 2006–07*, Canberra, January 2008

Barta, Tony, 'Relations of Genocide: Land and Lives in the Colonization of Australia', in M. N. Dobkowski and I. Wallimann, eds, *Genocide in the Modern Age: Etiology and Case Studies of Mass Death*, Greenwood Press, New York, 1987

Barta, Tony, 'Sorry, and not Sorry, in Australia: How the Apology to the Stolen Generations Buried a History of Genocide', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 10, 2, 2008

Bartrop, Paul R., 'The Holocaust, the Aborigines, and the Bureaucracy of Destruction: An Australian Dimension of Genocide', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 3, 1, 2001

Batrop, Paul, and Samuel Totten, *Dictionary of Genocide*, two volumes, Greenwood Press, Westport, 2007

Biskup, Peter, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens: The Aboriginal Problem in Western Australia 1898–1954*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1973,

Bolt, Andrew, 'I Wasn't Stolen: Aboriginal Leader's Shock Admission', *Herald Sun*, 23 February 2001

Bolt, Andrew, 'Stolen Generations: My Melbourne Writers' Festival Speech', 5 September 2006

Brett, Judith, 'Every Morning as the Sun Came Up: The Enduring Pain of the "Stolen Generation"', *Times Literary Supplement*, 3 October 1997

Briscoe, Gordon, *Counting, Health and Identity: A History of Aboriginal Health and Demography in Western Australia and Queensland*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2003

Broome, Richard, *Aboriginal Australians*, 2nd ed., Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1994

Broome, Richard, *Aboriginal Victorians: A History From 1800*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2005

Brunton, Ron, 'Foster or Fester', *Weekend Australian*, 12–13 October, 1996

Brunton, Ron, *Betraying the Victims: The Stolen Generations' Report*, Institute of Public Affairs, Melbourne, February 1998

Brunton, Ron, *Correcting the False Scholarship Syndrome*, Institute of Public Affairs, Melbourne, 2001

Campbell, Judy, *Invisible Invaders: Smallpox and Other Diseases in Aboriginal Australia 1780–1880*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2002

Carlyon, Patrick, 'Lightning Bolt', *The Bulletin*, 7 March 2001

Carlyon, Patrick, 'White Lies', *The Bulletin*, 12 June 2001

Cassrels, Deborah, 'Exchange Brings History Home', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21–22 February 2009

Chisholm, Richard, *Black Children, White Welfare? Aboriginal Child Welfare Law and Policy in New South Wales*, Social Welfare Research Centre, University of New South Wales, April 1985

Choo, Christine, 'The Role of the Catholic Missionaries at Beagle Bay in the Removal of Aboriginal Children From Their Families in the Kimberley Region From the 1890s', *Aboriginal History*, 21, 1997

Choo, Christine, *Mission Girls: Aboriginal Women on Catholic Missions in the Kimberley, Western Australia, 1900–1950*, University of Western Australia Press, Crawley, 2001

Clements, Theresa, *From Old Maloga: The Memoirs of an Aboriginal Woman*, Fraser & Morphet printers, Prahran, 193_,

Clendinnen, Inga, 'Drawing the Fangs of History', *The Australian Literary Review*, in *The Australian*, 4 March 2009

Cockburn, Stewart, *Notable Lives: Profiles of 21 South Australians*, Ferguson Publications, Adelaide, 1997

Cole, Anna, Victoria Haskins and Fiona Paisley, eds, *Uncommon Ground: White Women in Aboriginal History*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2005,

Colebatch, Hal G. P., 'Michael Thwaites, 1915–2005', *Quadrant*, January 2006

Collenette, Peter, 'Guilt Fires Inquiry Into Taken Children', *Examiner*, Launceston, 21 December 1995

Collins, John, 'A Mate in Publishing', in Adam Shoemaker, ed., *Oodgeroo: A Tribute*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1994

Cornford, Philip, 'Proud People Reborn', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 May 2007

Crotty, Martin, John Germov and Grant Rodwell, eds, *A Race for a Place: Eugenics, Darwinism and Social Thought and Practice in Australia*, University of Newcastle, Newcastle, 2000

Cummings, Barbara, *Take This Child: From Kahlin Compound to the Retta Dixon Home*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1990

Cuneen, Chris, and Julia Grix, 'Chronology of the Stolen Generations Litigation 1993–2003', *Indigenous Law Bulletin*, 17, 2003

Cuneen, Chris, and Julia Grix, 'The Limitations of Litigation in Stolen Generations Cases', Online PDF file, Institute of Criminology, University of Sydney Law School, Sydney, 2003

Curthoys, Ann, 'Response: Refiguring Histories of Women and Children', *Australian Historical Studies*, 32, 117, 2001

Curthoys, Ann, 'Liberalism and Exclusionism: A Prehistory of the White Australia Policy', in Laksiri Jayasuriya, David Walker and Jan Gothard, eds, *Legacies of White Australia: Race, Culture and Nation*, University of Western Australia Press, Perth, 2003

Curthoys, Ann, *Freedom Ride*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2002

Curthoys, Ann, and John Docker, 'Genocide: Definitions, Questions, Settler-Colonies', *Aboriginal History*, 25, 2001

Dalley, Helen, 'Failure to Act is Unforgivable', *Sun-Herald*, 30 December 2007

Davidson, Alastair, 'The Politics of Exclusion in an Era of Globalization', in Laksiri Jayasuriya, David Walker and Jan Gothard, eds, *Legacies of White Australia: Race, Culture and Nation*, University of Western Australia Press, Perth, 2003

Davies, Norman, *No Simple Victory: World War II in Europe, 1939–1945*, Viking, New York, 2007

Denholm, Matthew, 'Reunion a Return to Cruel, Painful Past', *The Australian*, 5 September 2002

Deveson, Anne, *Faces of Change* (book of the TV series), ABC/Fontana, Sydney, 1984

Dickey, Brian, *No Charity There: A Short History of Social Welfare in Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1987

Drake-Brockman, Judith, *Wongi Wongi: To Speak*, Hesperian Press, Carlisle, 2001

Edwards, Coral, and Peter Read, eds, *The Lost Children: Thirteen Australians Taken From their Aboriginal Families Tell of the Struggle to Find Their Natural Parents*, Doubleday, Sydney, 1989

Ellis, Havelock, *The Task of Social Hygiene*, Constable, London, 1912

Elphick, Beverley Gulambali, and Don Elphick, *The Camp of Mercy: An Historical and Biographical Record of the Warangesda Aboriginal Mission/Station, Darlington Point New South Wales*, Gulambali Aboriginal Research, Canberra, 2004

Elphick, Beverley, and Don Elphick, *Menindee Mission Station 1933–1949*, Canberra 1996

Elphick, Beverley, and Don Elphick, *Riverina Aboriginals 1874–1945*, Canberra, 1996

Elphick, Beverley, and Don Elphick, eds, *Kinchela Aboriginal Home and School: Alphabetical Index of Students*, Canberra, 1997

Elphick, Don, *Aborigines Mentioned in the Minutes of the Meetings of the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Board (APB 1890–1939) and the Aborigines Welfare Board (AWB 1939–1969)*, Canberra, 1998

Evans, Caroline, and Naomi Parry, 'Vessels of Progressivism? Tasmanian State Girls and Eugenics, 1900–1940', *Australian Historical Studies*, 117, October 2001

Fletcher, J. J., *Clean, Clad and Courteous: A History of Aboriginal Education in New South Wales*, J. J. Fletcher, Sydney, 1989

Fletcher, J. J., ed., *Documents in the History of Aboriginal Education in New South Wales*, J. J. Fletcher, Sydney, 1989

Flood, Josephine, *The Original Australians: Story of the Aboriginal People*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2006

Flynn, M., and S. Stanton, 'Trial by Ordeal: The Stolen Generations in Court', *Alternative Law Journal*, 25, 2, 2000

Foley, Gary, 'Duplicity and Deceit: Gary Foley's Take on Rudd's Apology to the Stolen Generations', *Melbourne Historical Journal*, Volume 36, 2008

Gaita, Raimond, 'Genocide and Pedantry', *Quadrant*, July–August 1997

Gaita, Raimond, 'Peace Crimes', *Weekend Australian*, 5 July 1997

Gaita, Raimond, 'The Stolen Children', *Quadrant*, January–February 1998

Gaita, Raimond, *A Common Humanity*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 1999

Gaita, Raimond, 'Sorry, but it's no Time for Minds to Slam Shut', *Australian Literary Review*, in *The Australian*, 7 May 2008

Gammage, Bill, and Peter Spearritt, eds, *Australians, 1938*, Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, Sydney, 1987

Gandevia, Bryan, *Tears Often Shed: Child Health and Welfare in Australia From 1788*, Pergamon Press, Sydney, 1978

Gare, Nene, review of *My Place*, *Westerly*, 3, 1987

Gigliotti, Simone, 'Unspeakable Pasts as Limit Events: The Holocaust, Genocide and the Stolen Generations', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 49, 2, 2003

Goodall, Heather, '"Saving the Children": Gender and the Colonization of Aboriginal Children in NSW, 1788 to 1990', *Aboriginal Law Bulletin*, 2, 44, 1990

Goodall, Heather, *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1770–1972*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1996

Green, Anna, '"Unpacking" the Stories', in Anna Green and Megan Hutching, eds, *Remembering: Writing Oral History*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2004

Griffin, James, *John Wren: A Life Reconsidered*, Scribe Publications, Melbourne 2004

Guilliatt, Richard, 'Why Kids Hate Australian History', *Weekend Australian Magazine*, 23–24 February 2008

Haebich, Anna, *For Their Own Good: Aborigines and Government in the South West of Western Australia 1900–1940*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1988

Haebich, Anna, *Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families 1800–2000*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 2000

Haebich, Anna, '"Between Knowing and Not Knowing": Public Knowledge of the Stolen Generations', *Aboriginal History*, 25, 2001

Haebich, Anna, '"Clearing the Wheat Belt": Erasing the Indigenous Presence in the Southwest of Western Australia', in Dirk Moses, ed, *Genocide and Settler Society*, Berghan Books, New York, 2004

Hall, Robert A., *The Black Diggers: Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the Second World War*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1989

Hannaford, Ivan, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West*, Woodrow Wilson Center Press, Washington, 1996

Harrison, Kenneth, *Dark Man, White World: A Portrait of Tenor Harold Blair*, Novalit, Melbourne, 1975

Haskins, Victoria, '"A Better Chance"? Sexual Abuse and the Apprenticeship of Aboriginal Girls Under the NSW Aborigines Protection Board', *Aboriginal History*, 28, 2004

Hasluck, Paul, *Black Australians: A Survey of Native Policy in Western Australia 1829-1897*, (1942), Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2nd ed., 1970

Hasluck, Paul, *Shades of Darkness: Aboriginal Affairs 1925-1965*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1988

Hill, Rosamond and Florence, *What we Saw in Australia*, Macmillan, London, 1875

Holland, Alison, 'Wives and Mothers Like Ourselves? Exploring White Women's Intervention in the Politics of Race, 1920s–1940s', *Australian Historical Studies*, 32, 117, October 2001

Holland, Alison, 'Mary Bennett and the Feminists: A Response', *Australian Historical Studies*, 120, October 2002

Holland, Alison, '"Whatever her Race, a Woman is not a Chattel" Mary Montgomery Bennett', in Anna Cole, Victoria Haskins and Fiona Paisley, eds, *Uncommon Ground: White Women in Aboriginal History*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2005

Horsburgh, Michael, 'The Apprenticing of Dependent Children in NSW Between 1850 and 1885', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 7, November 1980

Howson, Peter, 'Rescued from the Rabbit Burrow: Understanding the "Stolen Generations"', *Quadrant*, June 1999

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children From Their Families*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, April 1997

Hunter, Ernest, '"Freedom's Just Another Word": Aboriginal Youth and Mental Health', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 29, 3, 1995

Jacobs, Pat, *Mister Neville*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 1990

Jacobs, Patricia, 'Science and Veiled Assumptions: Miscegenation in WA, 1930–1937', *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, 2, 1986

Jones, Jennifer, 'As Long as She Got Her Voice: How Cross-Cultural Collaboration Shapes Aboriginal Textuality', *Altitude*, 5, 5, 2005, Reading Indigenous Australian Texts Part 1, www.api-network.com/cgi-bin/altitude21c/fly?page=Issue5

Jones, Jennifer, 'The Black Communist: The Contested Memory of Margaret Tucker', *Hecate*, 22, 2, 2000

Jopson, Depra, 'Journey Into the Past', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 September 2002

Kabaila, Peter, *Cootamundra: The Aboriginal Girls Home*, Peter Rimas Kabaila, AIATSIS-funded project, 1994

Kamien, Max, *The Dark People of Bourke: A Study of Planned Social Change*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, and Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands NJ, 1978

Katona, Jacqui, and Chips Mackinolty, eds, *The Long Road Home: The Going Home Conference 3–6 October 1994*, Karu Aboriginal Child Care Agency, Darwin, 1996

Keating, Paul, *Paul Keating, Prime Minister: Major Speeches of the First Year*, Australian Labor Party, Canberra, n.d.

Kiernan, Ben, *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination From Sparta to Darfur*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2008

Kingston, Beverley, *My Wife, My Daughter and Poor Mary Ann: Women and Work in Australia*, Nelson, Melbourne, 1975

Kruger, Alec, and Gerard Waterford, *Alone on the Soaks: The Life and Times of Alec Kruger*, IAD Press, Alice Springs, 2007

Lake, Marilyn, *Faith: Faith Bandler, Gentle Activist*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2002

Langton, Marcia, 'Faraway Downs Fantasy Resonates Close to Home', *The Age*, 23 November 2008

Laurie, Victoria, 'Morgan's *My Place* "Hollow History"', *The Australian*, 19 March 2004

Lawrence, David, 'The Early Ethnographic Writings of E.W. Pearson Chinnery: Government anthropologist of New Guinea', Frederick Watson Fellowship Paper, National Archives of Australia, Canberra, March 2006

Legislative Council of New South Wales, Standing Committee on Social Issues, *Releasing the Past: Adoption Practices 1950–1998, Final Report*, December 2000

Lennon, Paul, 'Cash is a Mere Gesture', *Australian*, 29 January 2008

Link-Up (NSW) and Tikka Jan Wilson, *In the Best Interest of the Child? Stolen Children: Aboriginal Pain/White Shame*, Aboriginal History Monograph 4, Australian National University, Canberra, 1997

MacDonald, Rowena, 'Between Two Worlds: The Commonwealth Government and the Removal of Aboriginal Children of Part Descent in the Northern Territory — an Australian Archives Exhibition', *Aboriginal History*, 18, 1994

MacDonald, Rowena, ed., *Between Two Worlds: The Commonwealth Government and the Removal of Aboriginal Children of Part Descent in the Northern Territory*, IAD Press, Alice Springs, 1995

Macintyre, Stuart, *The Reds: The Communist Party of Australia, From Origins to Illegality*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1998

Macleod, Colin, *Patrol in the Dreamtime*, Reed Books Australia, Melbourne, 1997

Maddock, Kenneth, 'Genocide? The Silence of the Anthropologists', *Quadrant*, November 2000

Mallet, Molly, *My Past — Their Future: Stories from Cape Barren Island*, Blubber Head Pres/Riawunna Centre for Aboriginal Education, Hobart, 2001

Manne, Robert, 'The Stolen Generations', *Quadrant*, February 1998

Manne, Robert, *In Denial: The Stolen Generations and the Right*, The Australian Quarterly Essay, 1, Schwartz Publishing, Melbourne, 2001

Marcus, Andrew, 'Under the Act', in Bill Gammage and Peter Spearritt, eds, *Australians, 1938*, Fairfax, Syme and Weldon Associates, Sydney, 1987

Maris, Hyllus, and Sonia Borg, *Women of the Sun* (introduction, script, stills), Currency Press, Sydney, 1983

Maris, Hylus, and Sonia Borg, *Women of the Sun* (novel), Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1983

Markus, Andrew, *Governing Savages*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1990

Mattingly, Christobel, and Ken Hampton, eds, *Survival in Our Own Land: Aboriginal Experiences in 'South Australia' Since 1836*, Hodder & Stoughton, Sydney, 1992

Maushart, Susan, *Sort of a Place Like Home: Remembering the Moore River Native Settlement*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 1993

McGregor, Russell, '"Breed Out the Colour" or the Importance of Being White', *Australian Historical Studies*, 120, October 2002

McGuinness, P. P., 'Poor Fella My "Stolen Generation"', *Quadrant*, November 1999

McGuinness, P. P., 'An Inventor Fumbles to Maintain the Fable', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 February 2001

McKendrick, Jane, Trevor Cutter, Alan Mackenzie and Edmond Chiu, 'The Pattern of Psychiatric Morbidity in a Victorian Urban Aboriginal General Practice Population', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 26, 1992

McKenzie, Maisie, *Mission to Arnhem Land*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1976

McLean, Donald, *Children in Need: An Account of the Administration and Functions of the Child Welfare Department, New South Wales, Australia, With an Examination of the Principles Involved in Helping Deprived and Wayward Children*, Government Printer, Sydney, 1956

Morgan, Margaret, *A Drop in a Bucket: The Mount Margaret Story*, United Aborigines Mission, Box Hill, 1986

Morgan, Sally, *My Place*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 1987

Morgan, Sally, *Wanamurraganya: The Story of Jack McPhee*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 1989

Moriarty, John, with Evan McHugh, *Saltwater Fella*, Viking, Ringwood, 2000

Moses, Dirk, 'Blood Curdling', *The Australian's Review of Books*, June 2001

Moses, Dirk, ed., *Genocide and Settler Society*, Berghan Books, New York, 2004

Narogin, Mudrooroo, *Writing From the Fringe*, Hyland House, Melbourne, 1990

National Aboriginal Health Strategy Working Party, *A National Aboriginal Health Strategy*, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Canberra, 1989

Neville, Alisoun, '*Cubillo v. Commonwealth*: Classifying Text and the Violence of Exclusion', *Macquarie Law Journal*, 5, 2005

Newman, Joan, 'Reader Response to Transcribed Oral Narrative: *A Fortunate Life* and *My Place*', *Southerly*, 4, 48, 1988

O'Connor, P., 'History on Trial: Cubillo and Gunner v. The Commonwealth of Australia', *Alternative Law Journal*, 26, 1, 2001

O'Donoghue, Lowitja, 'A Journey of Healing or a Road to Nowhere?', in Michelle Grattan, ed., *Reconciliation: Essays on Australian Reconciliation*, Black Inc, Melbourne, 2000

Perez, Eugene, *Kalumburu: The Benedictine Mission and the Aborigines 1908–1975*, Kalumburu Benedictine Mission, Wyndham, 1977

Perkins, Charles, *A Bastard Like Me*, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1975

Perkins, Rachel, and Marcia Langton, eds, *First Australians: An Illustrated History*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2008

Pilkington, Doris, *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence*, (1996), University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 2002

Quiggin, Pat, *No Rising Generation: Woman and Fertility in Late Nineteenth Century Australia*, Department of Demography, Australian National University, 1988

Ramsland, John, 'The Development of Boarding-Out Systems in Australia 1860–1910', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, 60, 3, 1974

Ramsland, John, 'An Anatomy of a Nineteenth Century Child-Saving Institution: The Randwick Asylum for Destitute Children', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, 70, 3, 1984

Ramsland, John, *Children of the Back Lanes: Destitute and Neglected Children in Colonial New South Wales*, New South Wales University Press, Sydney, 1986

Raynes, Cameron, *A Little Flour and a Few Blankets: An Administrative History of Aboriginal Affairs in South Australia, 1834–2000*, State Records of South Australia, Adelaide, 2002

Raynes, Cameron, *The Last Protector: The Illegal Removal of Aboriginal Children From Their Parents in South Australia*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 2009

Read, Peter, *The Stolen Generations: The Removal of Aboriginal Children in New South Wales 1883 to 1969*, NSW Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, Sydney, Occasional Paper No. 1, Sydney, 1981

Read, Peter, *A Hundred Years War: The Wiradjuri People and the State*, Australian National University Press, Sydney, 1988

Read, Peter, *Down There With Me on the Cowra Mission*, Pergamon Press, Sydney, 1989

Read, Peter, 'Introduction', to Coral Edwards and Peter Read, eds, *The Lost Children: Thirteen Australians Taken from their Aboriginal Families Tell of the Struggle to Find Their Natural Parents*, Doubleday, Sydney, 1989

Read, Peter, *Charles Perkins: A Biography*, Viking, Melbourne, 1990

Read, Peter, 'Don't Turn Your Back on Me: A Bibliographical Review of the Literature of the Stolen Generations', *Aboriginal Law Bulletin*, 1995

Read, Peter, *A Rape of the Soul so Profound: The Return of the Stolen Generations*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1999

Read, Peter, 'Clio or Janus? Historians and the Stolen Generations', *Australian Historical Studies*, 33, 118, 2002

Read, Peter, 'How Many Separated Aboriginal Children?', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 49, 2, 2003

Read, Peter, 'Don't Let the Facts Spoil this Historian's Campaign', *The Australian*, 18 February 2008

Reynolds, Henry, *This Whispering in Our Hearts*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1998

Reynolds, Henry, *Black Pioneers: How Aboriginal and Islander People Helped Build Australia*, Penguin, Ringwood, 2000

Reynolds, Henry, *An Indelible Stain?: The Question of Genocide in Australia's History*, Viking, Melbourne, 2001

Reynolds, Henry, *Nowhere People*, Viking, Melbourne, 2005

Rintoul, Stuart, *The Wailing: A National Black Oral History*, William Heinemann, Melbourne, 1993

Rintoul, Stuart, 'Ugly Attempt to Bash the Victim', *Weekend Australian*, 24–25 February 2001

Rintoul, Stuart, 'Going Home', *Australian Magazine, The Weekend Australian*, 21–22 April 2001

Roberts, Annette, *Sister Eileen: A Life With the Lid Off*, Access Press, Bassendean, 2002

Rowley, C. D., *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society: Aboriginal Policy and Practice, Volume I*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1970

Rowley, C. D., *Outcasts in White Australia: Aboriginal Policy and Practice, Volume II*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1971

Rowley, C. D., *The Remote Aborigines: Aboriginal Policy and Practice, Volume III*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1971

Rumley, Hilary, and Sandy Toussaint, 'Policy and Practice at Moola Bulla', *Aboriginal History*, 14, 1–2, 1990

Seiffert, Murray, *Refuge on the Roper: The Origins of Roper River Mission Ngukurr*, Acorn Press, Melbourne, 2008

Sheehan, Paul, *The Electronic Whorehouse*, Macmillan, Sydney, 2003

Smythe, Mervyn, and Associates, *An Analysis of the Media Coverage of Bringing Them Home, Volume 1: Analysis and Summary Data; Volume 2: Extracts from Newspaper Coverage*, Sydney, June 1998

Sorenson, Rosemary, and Ashleigh Wilson, 'Stolen Generations Listed as Genocide', *The Australian*, 24 March 2008

Tatz, Colin, 'Genocide in Australia', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 1, 3, 1999

Tatz, Colin, *Genocide in Australia*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Research Discussion Paper number 8, Canberra, 1999

Tatz, Colin, 'Confronting Aboriginal Genocide', *Aboriginal History*, 25, 2001

Tatz, Colin, *With Intent to Destroy: Reflecting on Genocide*, Verso, London, 2003

Tickner, Robert, *Taking a Stand: Land Rights to Reconciliation*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2001

Toohey, Paul, 'Child-Mums in Cycle of Neglect', *The Australian*, 29 February 2008

Tucker, Margaret , *If Everyone Cared: Autobiography of Margaret Tucker MBE*, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1977

Turner, Ian, *Industrial Labour and Politics: The Dynamics of the Labour Movement in Eastern Australia, 1900–1921*, Australian National University, Canberra, 1965

Tylor, Peter J., *Humble and Obedient Servants: The Administration of New South Wales*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2006

Vamplew, Wray, ed., *Australians: Historical Statistics*, Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, Sydney, 1987

Van Krieken, Robert, 'The "Stolen Generations" and Cultural Genocide: The Forced Removal of Australian Indigenous Children From Their Families and its Implications for the Sociology of Childhood', *Childhood*, 6, 3, August 1999

Walden, Inara, 'To Send Her to Service: Aboriginal Domestic Servants', *Aboriginal Law Bulletin*, 3, 76, October 1995

Walden, Inara, 'Step Brings Back Some Humanity', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 February 2008

Whittington, Vera, *Sister Kate: A Life Dedicated to Children in Need of Care*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1999

Wild, Rex, and Pat Anderson, *Little Children are Sacred*: Report of the Northern Territory Board of Inquiry Into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse, Northern Territory Government, Darwin, April 2007

Wilson, Ashleigh, 'Under-5s Found With Sex Diseases', *The Australian*, 19 December 2007

Windschuttle, Keith, 'Steinbeck's Myth of the Okies', *New Criterion*, June 2002

Windschuttle, Keith, *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History, Volume One: Van Diemen's Land 1803–1847*, Macleay Press, Sydney, 2002

Windschuttle, Keith, *The White Australia Policy*, Macleay Press, Sydney, 2004

UNIVERSITY THESES

Bridges, Barry, The Sydney Orphan Schools, MEd Hons thesis, University of Sydney, 1973

Brindley, Merryl-Leigh, The Home on the Hill: The Story Behind the Cootamundra Girls' Home, MA (Aboriginal Studies) thesis, University of South Australia, 1994

Brown, Diane, Publishing Culture: Commissioning Books in Australia, 1970–2000, PhD thesis, Department of Communication, Language and Cultural Studies, Victoria University, 2003

Copland, Mark, Calculating Lives: The Numbers and Narratives of Forced Removals in Queensland 1859–1972, PhD thesis, School of Art, Media and Culture, Griffith University, 2005

Windschuttle, Elizabeth, The Female School of Industry 1826–47, BA Hons thesis, Department of History, University of Sydney, 1977

FILM AND TELEVISION

'An Unhealthy Government Experiment', Episode Five of *First Australians: The Untold Story of Australia*, Beck Cole director, script by Beck Cole and Louis Nowra, Helen Panckhurst series producer, SBS Television, 2008

Australia, Baz Luhrmann director, producers Baz Luhrmann, Catherine Knapman, G. Mac Brown, screenplay by Baz Luhrmann, Ronald Harwood, Stuart Beattie, Richard Flanagan, 20th Century Fox, 2008

Lousy Little Sixpence, Alec Morgan director, Alec Morgan and Gerald Bostock producers, Sixpence Productions/Australian Film Commission, 1983

Rabbit-Proof Fence, Phil Noyce director, Christine Olsen screenplay, Phil Noyce and Christine Olsen producers, Australian Film Finance Corporation, Premium Movie Partnership, South Australian Film Corporation and Jabal Films, 2002

The Last Tasmanian, Tom Haydon producer and director, script by Rhys Jones and Tom Haydon, Artis Film Productions, Sydney, 1978

Women of the Sun, Geoffrey Nottage director, Hyllus Maris and Sonia Borg screenplay, Bob Weis producer, Generation Films, 1982

INDEX

Abbott, C. L. A 495
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission 273, 322
Aboriginal apprentices, boarding out system 154-64
Aboriginal babies 81–2, 95, 100
Aboriginal birthrate 78, 106, conspiracy to reduce 31-2, 172-6
Aboriginal camps 198–200, 232, 235, 238–9
Aboriginal expenditure by governments 207-12, 402-5
Aboriginal Girl's Plea for Understanding, An 300
Aboriginal institutions, discipline and punishment 263–79, effects of 249–50, ethnic identity 248–9, facilities for inmates 258–61, isolation from parents 250, length of separation 244–7, loss of family love 253–5, quality of accommodation 256–8, training programs 279–81, 411–7
Aboriginal Languages 470
Aboriginal Legal Service 273, 430
Aboriginal Mother Tells of the Old and the New, An 68
Aboriginal reserves, 27, 35, 57, policy on closures 164–72, NSW 200–7
Aboriginal stations 27–9, 33, 43, 56, 58, 200, 204–7, 201–3, 211–2, 221–3, 225, 227, NSW 200–7
Aboriginal Tasmanians, The 540
Aboriginal Victorians 557, 564, 565
Aboriginal wards, Tasmania 550, 551
Aboriginal Welfare 342–55, 360–75, 381, 397
Aboriginal Welfare Board, VIC 555, 566, 567
Aboriginality 245–9
Aboriginals Act of 1910, NT 486
Aboriginals Ordinances, NT 1911 and 1918 NT 387, 486, 511, 519, 533–5
Aborigines Act, 1905 WA 351
Aborigines Act, VIC 1957 564
Aborigines Act, WA 1905 406, 410, 412, 446–7, 454
Aborigines Advancement League 555
Aborigines Inland Mission 117, 150–1, 244, 258, 282–3, 496, 497, 501, 504, 507–11, 530–1
Aborigines Progressive Association 183, 186
Aborigines Protection (Amendment) Act, NSW 1936 210, 222

Aborigines Protection (Amendment) Act, NSW 1943 183, 184
Aborigines Protection Act, NSW 1909 57, 77, 95, 98, 106, 136, 143, 145, 158, 161, 204, 221
Aborigines Protection Act, VIC 1886, 561, 562
Aborigines Protection Act, WA, Amendment 1897 412
Aborigines Protection Amending Act, NSW 1915 97, 234, 239
Aborigines Protection Association 131, 139, 156, 158, 163, 201, 219, 220, 223, 230, 233, 287
Aborigines Protection Board, NSW 27, 30–6, 52, 56–61, 7375–6, 82–102, 106–11, 124, 129, 135, 137–52, 154, 156–82, 195, 200–41, 244–61, 267, 269–75, 278–88, 293, 297, 304, 364, 561
Aborigines Protection Board, WA 403
Aborigines Protection League (Native State) 358
Aborigines Welfare Board, NSW 34, 56, 128, 182–9
Aborigines Welfare Board, VIC 554, 558, 560, 564–6
Aborigines, camp culture 212–16, 'dying race' 105, 176–9, 361–3, independent 198, 203–7, 227–8, indolent 222, intemperance 216, itinerant 200, 206, last wild tribe 215, population growth 26–27, 105–7, 364
Adalian, Rouben Paul 13
Adelaide 496–500, 517
Adoption Act, VIC 1964 566
Adoptions of Aboriginal children, VIC 565–9
Advertiser, Adelaide 49, 328
Age of children at separation 80, 83, 247
Agnes Creek 323
Albrecht, F. W. 477
Alexandra River 496
Alexandria 496
Alice Springs 3, 333–40, 479–91, 496–501, 504–5, 513–19, 523–33
Anderson, Pat 237
Andromache 359
Angledool 84, 108, 211, 231, 236–9
Annear, C. J. 443
Anti-Slavery and Aborigines' Protection Society, UK 462
apology by Kevin Rudd 11–12, 22–3, 25, 39–41, 47–9, 293, 322, 324, 325
apprentices 80, 84–6, 103, 119
Apprentices Act, 1828 191
Apprentices Act, NSW 1901 164, 169, 182, 192
apprenticeship 76, 79, 94–5, 100, 118, 123, 126, 154, 156, 160, 162, 164–5, 168–82, 187, 189–95, outcomes 179–82, sexual vulnerability of girls 239–42
Armidale 209
Armitage, Andrew 502–3
Arnhem Land 484, 491, 494, 496, 504–5
Arthur, Jay 73
Artlunga Mission 504
ashamed to be Aboriginal, 51, 59, 261
Ashfield 496
Ashley Home for Boys 544
Ashley, Lady Sarah 11
assimilation 343, 348, 354–6, 361, 366–7, 371, 373–79, 382–4, 399
Atkinson, Alan 15
Attwood, Bain 207–8, 216, 292, 300, 329–30, 467
Aunt Jingle 335
Auntie May 298
Auschwitz 14, 49, 292, 265
Austin, Tony 71, 498, 502–3
Australia 1938 Oral History Project 433
Australia 2, 6–12, 42, 44–5, 47, 49–54, 61, 63–71
Australia's Amateur Hour 500, 555

Australian Aboriginal as a Human Being, The 462
Australian Aboriginal Fellowship 186
Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association 62
Australian Aboriginal, The 357, 358, 359, 380
Australian Aborigines League 186
Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry 612, 613, 614
Australian Archives 480
Australian Army 248, 375
Australian Board of Missions 470
Australian Broadcasting Commission 515
Australian Bureau of Statistics 615
Australian Constitution 386
Australian Film Commission 67–8
Australian Financial Review 49
Australian Historical Studies 44, 51
Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies 48
Australian Labor Party 36, 129, 555
Australian Museum 480
Australian National University 52, 53, 54, 55, 66, 299, 336, 433, 480, 496–7
Australian of the Year 322
Australian Research Grants Scheme 433
Australian School of Pacific Administration 521
Australian Security Intelligence Organization 303
Australians 1938 432–4

Badjaling 459
Bagot Reserve and Compound 482–3, 496–7, 507–12, 524
Balaklava 496–9
Ballarat Orphanage 562
Bandler, Faith 37, 100, 186–7
Bandler, Hans 186
Banka Banka Station 530, 531
Bankstown 259
Barker, Dr 11
Barnes, Nancy 329
Barrington 141, 142
Barringun 218, 221
Barrow Creek 496
Barta, Tony 292, 293
Bartrop, Paul 14, 16, 52–3, 344
Barwick, Diane 562
Barwon River tribes 215
Basedow, Herbert 357–9, 369, 380
Bastard Like Me, A 332–3, 335
Bates, Daisy 362, 442, 443, 464
Bath 425
Bathurst 218
Bathurst Island 373
Bathurst Island Mission 373, 484, 492, 504
Bauman, Zygmunt 54
Baume, Peter 45
Bayswater 562
Beagle Bay Mission 437, 440, 442, 444, 446, 448–51, 453–5, 457–61, 464, 466, 469–73
Beazley, Kim 44
Beckett, J. T. 488–9
Bega 116
Bellingen 228
Bellinger River 217, 228
Belorussia 13
Belsen 265
Benedictine monks 444, 457, 471
Ben-Gurion, David 14
Bennelong's Haven 273
Bennett House 423
Bennett, Mary 326, 457, 459, 461–6, 471–4, 478
Bettelheim, Bruno 52
Between Two Worlds 68, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 506, 532
Beverley 413
Beyond Sorry 68
Birdum, Mountain Valley 511
Bishop Auckland football club 337
Biskup, Peter 349, 352–3, 355, 359, 375–6, 402, 404–5, 410,

412–3, 433, 435, 447, 456–8, 460–1, 469–72
Black Diggers, The 495, 498
Black Panthers 34, 64, 65
Black Power 339
Black, George 239–40
Blair, Harold 35, 302, 554–8
Bleakley, J. W. 3, 10, 11, 129, 371–400, 482–3, 485–90, 493–4,
Blick, Graham 445, 453
Blood and Soil, 15, 16
Blumenbach, Johann Friedrich 358
Board for the Protection of Aborigines, Victoria 561
Board for the Protection of the Aborigines, NSW 135, 137–8
boarding out 154, 157, 162, 182, 189, 194–6
Bolt, Andrew 16, 55, 323–5, 329–31
Bomaderry Children's Home 28, 58, 75, 83–4, 95–6, 108, 112, 118, 121, 122, 150–1, 161, 244–7, 250–1, 257, 269–70, 279, 282
bombing of Darwin 494
Bondi Beach 33, 209
boob, at Moore River Settlement 416–7
Boomi 221
bora ceremony 215
Borg, Sonia 67
Borroloola 496
Boseley, Nicholas 68
Botanic Gardens, Sydney 33, 209
Botany Bay 133
Botany reserve, 198, 199
Bott, A. H. 516
Bourke 25, 221, 612, 613
Bourke District Hospital 613
Bowraville 230
Brain, Roderick 221, 231–2, 240
Branagh, Kenneth 1, 5, 128
Bray v. Commonwealth 23, 47, 533
Bray, George 533
Bray, F. I. 514
breeding out the colour 2, 3, 5, 11, 345–7, 352, 359, 361, 369, 375, 376–7, 380, 383–6, 390–1, 397, 400
Brennan, Chief Justice Gerard 44, 534
Brett, Judith 51
Brewarrina Aboriginal Station 84, 123, 129, 137–8, 141, 158, 160, 201–2, 217–8, 221, 223–4, 231–2, 234, 237, 239–40, 252, 284, 286
Briggs, Maggie 293
Brindley, Merryl-Leigh 90, 220, 240, 251, 252, 255, 256, 257, 262, 263, 264, 265, 268, 280, 281
Bringing Them Home 13–14, 24–6, 28–9, 32, 36, 38, 42–55, 61, 63, 71, 74, 79, 81, 91, 97, 129–30, 178, 180, 184–5, 188, 265–8, 287–95, 265–7, 278, 287–95, 318, 321, 327–8, 342, 356, 362–3, 382–3, 386, 403, 417, 421, 434–6, 438–9, 448, 455–6, 481, 498, 502, 506–7, 517, 533, 538, 540–6, 549–52, 555–8, 560–2, 564–7, 609–16
Briscoe, Gordon 336, 362–3, 497–8, 500
British Tube Mills, Adelaide 336
Broken Circles 71, 243–4, 250, 288, 356, 362, 425, 428–32, 434, 439, 440
Broome 442–3, 445, 447, 450, 453–4, 461, 469, 494
Broome, Richard 293, 557, 564
Brotherhood of St Paul 334
Brown Skin Baby 68, 81
Brown, Diane 306
Brown, Heather 553
Brown, Herbert 386, 388, 390, 393–6
Bruce, Stanley Melbourne 372, 389, 399
Brungle Aboriginal Station 84, 86, 112, 121, 141, 158, 160, 200, 211, 215, 225–6, 234, 253, 293

Brunton, Ron 16, 43, 55
Bryan, Cyril 355
Buckland Hill 428, 429
Bulletin, The 325, 483
Bungalow, The 333–4, 367, 479, 482–5, 496–7, 513, 524, 533
Bung-arra 465
Burnt Bridge Aboriginal Station 112, 113, 267
Burra Bee Dee 234
Burragorang 198
Byrne, John 198–9

Cabbage Tree Island 141, 211
Cabramatta 115
Camden Boys' Home 84
Camden Harbour 446
Camp of Mercy, The 287
Campbell, Grace 423
Canberra conference, 1937 343, 348–9, 351, 359, 361–2, 366, 369, 371, 452
Canberra Times 49
Cann, John 234, 235
Canterbury Boys' High School 259
Cape Barren Island 36, 539–49, 552–3
Cape Barren Island Reserve Act, 1912 539
Carlyon, Patrick 45, 48, 130, 325
Carmen, Leon 69
Carnarvon 314
Carowra Tank 209
Carrieton 11, 496
Carrington, Lord 256
Carrodus, J. A. 385–6, 389, 392, 396–7
Carrolup Settlement 7, 8, 356, 413, 419–20, 440
Casino 132, 151
Catholic Orphan School 191, 245
cattle trucks 499
censorship of children's letters 251
census of Aborigines, NSW 131, 134, 142, 150, 155, 178
Central Australian Aboriginal Land Congress 339
Central Land Council 339, 518
Chaney, Fred 45
Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith, The 204
Chase, Muriel 426
Chellow, Mrs 6
Cheltenham 298
Cherbourg Mission 555, 556
child brides 442–4, 461–6, 469
Child Endowment 515
child sexual abuse 228–39, 442–8, 461–6
Child Welfare Act, NSW 60
Child Welfare Act, VIC 1954, 564
Child Welfare Department, NSW 61
Child welfare policy, for Aborigines in NSW 128–89, for Aborigines in QLD 604–8, for Aborigines in SA 592–602, for Aborigines in VIC 559–65, for half-castes in NT 486–90, 502–7, 517–25, for white children in NSW 189–96, in TAS 546–52
child welfare, history of 189–91
Children's Courts NSW 97, 104, 108, 109, 114
Children's Welfare Department, VIC 562
Chinnery, E. W. Pearson 496, 501
Chisholm, Richard 186, 292
chlamydia 237
Choo, Christine 443–4, 446, 448, 451, 453–60, 466, 469, 471, 473
Christmas holidays 251
Chugg, Max 543
Church Missionary Association 491, 492
Church Missionary Society 496, 497, 500, 504
Church of England Orphanage, Parkerville 426
Cilento, Raphael 359

Circular Quay 197–8, 200, 203, 216
Clancy of the Overflow 204
Clare, Monica 301, 307
Claremont 312, 314, 316
Clarence River 217
Clean, Clad and Courteous 142
Cleland, J. B. 359
Clements, Evelyn 296, 298, 299
Clements, Geraldine 294, 296, 298
Clements, Margaret 293, 296–300
Clements, May 289, 293–4, 296, 298–9
Clements, Theresa 294, 298
Clendinnen, Inga 16
Clutterbuck, Katherine Mary, *see* Sister Kate
Cockburn, Stewart 328–9
Coe, Paul 34
Coffey, Ray 305–6, 308
Cole, Beck 21
Colebrook Home for Children 322, 323, 325, 327, 328, 329, 611
Collarenebri 110, 114, 121
Collier, Phillip 36
Colonial Office, UK 403
Columbia Pictures 261
Communist International 300
Communist Party of Australia 29, 37, 54, 186, 266, 273, 299–300, 304, 367, 556
Community Development Employment Program 224
compensation for removal 40, 46–7, 537–8, in Tasmania 552–4
Condobolin 110, 111, 124
Connelly, Martin 333
Constable, Kevin 516
Constitutional amendment campaign, 1967 187
Convent of the Good Shepherd, Ashfield 115
Convention on Genocide, UN 343, 363
Cook, Cecil 11, 35, 129, 344–99, 479, 490, 493, 494, 496
Coomalie Creek 494
Coomealla 557, 558
Coonabarabran 113, 133, 234
Coonardoo 307, 308, 359
Cooper, Malcolm 335
Cootamundra Girls' Home 20, 28–9, 58, 67, 75, 83–4, 89–90, 96, 98–9, 104–5, 109–10, 113–8, 120–2, 124, 128, 146, 150–1, 153, 155, 161, 166, 170, 174, 182–3, 185, 188, 198, 200, 243–7, 249–53, 255–7, 260–70, 273, 276, 279–80, 282, 291–2, 294–6, 298–9, 304
Cootamundra Hospital 266
Cootamundra morgue 267–8
Cootamundra punishment and death 265
Cootamundra tennis courts 260
Copeland 133
Coraki 117
Corunna Downs 305, 308–9, 312–4, 321
Corunna, Arthur, 308–9, 311–2, 316, 320
Corunna, Daisy 308–21
Cosgrove, Robert 547
Coverley, Aubrey 422
Cowan Creek 445
Cowra 141, 211, 218
Craig, Thomas 4
Croatia soccer club 337
Crocodile Dundee 10
Crocodile Islands 484, 505
Croker Island 496–7, 500–1, 503–5
Crotty, Martin 378, 382
Crusaders Camp Mission Hostel, Otford 496
Cubillo and Gunner v. Commonwealth 22–, 25, 28, 328–9, 505–7, 516–7, 519, 520, 522–9, 531–3
Cubillo, Lorna 22, 23, 25, 28, 36, 47, 50–1, 505–7, 515–35
Cumeroogunga Aboriginal Station 141, 143, 146–7, 158,

160, 171, 177, 201–2, 204, 211, 217, 219–20, 223, 231, 276, 284, 286, 297–9, 300, 472, 475
Cummings, Barbara 47, 69, 499, 502, 503, 512, 517, 530, 533
Curry, Mrs 269–70
Curthoys, Ann 53–4
Curtin University 3
Cyclone Tracey 507
Cygnet Bay 450, 454

Dachau 265
Daily Herald, London 388–9, 391
Daily Mail, UK 483
Daily Telegraph, Sydney 49, 324
Daisy 2–3, 5, 8–9, 424
Dalgety 314
Dalley, Helen 315, 319
Daniels, David 339
Danvers, Jams 220, 231, 239
Dark People of Bourke, The 612–3
Darlington Point 137, 217, 218
Darwin 28, 39, 41, 47, 69, 70, 71, 250, 447, 482–8, 494–8, 501, 504–11, 517–9, 524–5, 527, 530–3, bombing of 494–6, conference of 1994 250, evacuation of Aborigines from 494–502
Darwin, Charles 378
Davidson, Alastair 54
Dawn magazine 302, 304
Dawson, Justice Daryl 24, 534, 535
Day of Mourning 1938 63, 187
De Rose Hill station 322
Deakin University 52
Delegate 115
Democratic Labor Party 555
Deniliquin 218, 220, 294
Department of Aboriginal Afairs VIC 558
Department of Aboriginal Affairs QLD 554, 558
Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Commonwealth 322, 331, 338
Department of Aboriginal Affairs, NSW 77, 297
Department of Aboriginal Affairs, WA 401
Department of Child Welfare, NSW 188, 273
Department of Education TAS 547, 564
Department of Education, NSW 208, 228, 229, 230, 275
Department of Health TAS 547
Department of Health VIC 564
Department of Neglected Children TAS 562
Department of Public Instruction, NSW 27, 134, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 146, 148, 149
Department of Social Welfare TAS 543, 544, 547
Department of Social Welfare VIC 564, 566, 568
Department of the Interior 347, 370, 385–97
Department of the Prime Minister 385
Department of Youth and Community Services, NSW 186
Derby 443, 445, 447, 449–50, 494
Derby leprosarium 440
Deveson, Anne 67, 253–5, 262, 267–8, 271
Dickens, Charles 193–4
Dictionary of Genocide, 16
disciplinary regimes 263, 270, 276
diseases of dietary insufficiency 476
Dixon, Retta 283
Dobbie Award 69
Dodd, Andrew 325
Dodson, Mick 13, 28, 42–3, 45, 51, 130, 542
Dodson, Patrick 40
Dog Act 210
Donaldson, Robert 110, 129, 161–6, 168, 170, 214, 226
Donohoe, John 197–8
Dooa 464

doomed race theory 352, 361, 363
dormitories, children's 465–6, 468, 472–5, 496
Drake-Brockman, Alice 308, 310–20
Drake-Brockman, Howden 305, 308–9, 311–15
Drake-Brockman, Judith, 310–20
Drake-Brockman, June, 301, 318–9, 328, 332, 337, 339
Drew, Andrew 257
Drysdale River Mission 444–4, 456–7, 459, 471, 474, 494
Duguid, Charles 518
Dulhi Gunyah Orphanage 419, 420, 461
Dulwich Hill 115
Dungog 132
Durack, Mary 306–7
dying out thesis 105

Eakins, George 475
Echuca 137
Eden 132
Eden Hills 322–3
Edgerton Aboriginal Station 226
Education for Aboriginal children, NSW 139–50
Education preferred to institutionalization 27–28, 150–53
Edwards, Coral 30, 64, 66–8, 253, 254–5, 261–2, 266, 271, 275–6
Elcho Island 505
Elementary Education Act, WA 1871 412
Elkin, A. P. 188, 357, 371, 470, 521
Ellis, Havelock 379
Elphick Don 276, 287
Elphick, Beverley 276, 287, 296–7
Emmaville 121
Emo, Father Nicholas 444
Epidemiology of Leprosy in Australia, The 490
Erambie Mission 251, 296
Eric 294
Ernabella Mission 518
eugenics 344–5, 358, 376–83
Euraba Aboriginal Station 84, 118, 221
Euston 132
evacuation of Aborigines from Darwin 355, 494–502
Evans, Caroline 540
Evans, Ted 527
Everton football club 337
Exmouth Gulf 494
Exodus 52
Eyre, Jane 244

Faces of Change 67, 253–5, 262, 267, 271
Facey, Bert 306
fall of Singapore 495, 499
Fanny Bay jail 495
Federal Council of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders 555
Feltham, Mr 565
Female Orphan School, Sydney 190, 191
Female School of Industry, Sydney 190, 191
Ferguson, William 34, 162, 183
Finke River 491, 505
First Australians 21, 81, 401, 417, 616
First destination of Aboriginal wards, 83–4
Fisher, Betty 500
Fitzroy Crossing 448
Fitzroy River 443, 449, 450
Fletcher, Bertram 445
Fletcher, J. J. 140, 142
Flinders Island 539, 541, 548, 552
Flinders Ranges 11, 496
Flood, Josephine 326, 382
Flowers, Fred 129, 168
Flying Doctor Service 527
Fogarty, Miss 512
Foley, Gary 34, 40, 41
For Their Own Good 71, 349, 356, 362, 364, 383

Forbes 132
Ford, Mr 526
Forgiveness and Reconciliation 16
Forrest River Mission 434, 440, 454, 456, 459, 462, 464, 470, 476
Forster 141
Fortunate Life, A 306, 309
Fosbery, Edmund 136, 156–7, 164, 195, 214, 222, 230
foster care 26, 36, in NSW 182–6, in Tasmania 543–4, 554, 567–8
Foster, Jim 336
Foster, William 136
Franks, George 303
Fraser, Malcolm 43
Freedom Ride 188, 331, 337, 341
Fremantle Arts Centre Press 291, 305–6, 311, 319–20
French, Robert 479, 532
Fuller, Doug 326

Gaita, Raimond 35, 38–40, 44, 46, 51, 71, 344, 361–2, 417
Gale, Charles 405, 412, 449, 451, 460
Gallipoli 292, 306
Galton, Francis 378
Gammage, Bill 432, 433
Gandevia, Bryan 193
Garden Point Mission 497, 503–5
Gardiner, Ern 264
Gare, Nene 320
Gaudron, Justice Mary 534
genocide 11–18, 23–4, 27, 29, 34–40, 87, 95, 103, 106, Australia's reputation 13–16, tested in High Court 23–5, 532–6
Genocide and Settler Society, 15
Genocide Convention, UN 534–5
Genocide in Australia 51
genocide studies 13
George's River 198
Geraldton 447
Germov, John 378, 382
Gerrard, Alfie 432, 433
Gibbs, Pearl 34, 186–7
Gibney, Bishop Matthew 442, 443, 469
Gigliotti, Simone 290
gin spree 473
Girls' Training Home, Warangesda 152, 160
Glebe House 84
Glen Innes 112
Gnowangerup 459, 462
Going Home conference 1994 70, 517, 530, 533
gonococcal ophthalmia 229, 231, 238, 239
gonorrhoea 112, 228, 229, 231, 237, 368
Goodall, Heather 31–2, 71, 78, 80, 83, 97, 105–6, 125, 129, 161–4, 171–4, 176–7, 179, 181, 203, 207–10, 236–9
Goodooga 112
Goolagong, Evonne 49
Goondabluie Aboriginal Station 110
Goondabluie Reserve 215
gospels of Saint Mark and Saint Luke 470
Goulburn Island Mission 484, 505
Goulburn River 232
Governing Savages 71, 467, 468, 476, 477
Government Tourist Bureau, NSW 209
Grace 68
Gracie 2–3, 5–6, 8–9, 424
Grafton Aboriginal Station 129, 132, 141, 151, 158, 225
Grafton Hospital 117
Granite Downs 322, 326–7
Gray, F. H. 505
Gray, Justice Thomas 535, 575–602
Great Depression 8, 33, 208, 301, 366, 367, 372
Green, A. W. 269
Green, Anna 328, 329

Green, Harry 556
Gribble, Ernest 468, 470
Gribble, Jack, 471
Gribble, John 156–7
Griffith–Leeton district 252
Grime, Jack 312
Grimes, Peter 124–5
Groom, Ray 538
Groote Eylandt 476, 482, 484, 492, 493, 496, 497, 501, 504, 505
Grosvenor House 303
Gsell, Father Francis Xavier 492
Gulargambone 142
Gummow, Justice Charles 535
Gundagai 133, 160
Gunn, Mrs Aeneas 156
Gunner, Peter 22, 23, 25, 28, 36, 47, 50, 505–7, 515–33, 535
gymnasium, Kinchela 258–9

Haasts Bluff 524
Haberer, Eric 13
Hadley, Sydney 454
Haebich, Anna 33, 35, 71, 207, 243–4, 250, 288, 349, 356, 362–5, 375, 377, 383, 405, 417, 425, 428–32, 434, 439–41, 448, 451, 454–5, 461, 616
half-caste children as outcasts 525–30
half-caste children, reason for focus on 447–9, 451–3, 455, 457, 465
half-caste colony on Groote Eylandt 492–94
Half-Caste Home, Darwin 10, 482, 484, 487, 508–9
half-caste round-up at Moola Bulla 29, 432–9
Hall, Andrew 616
Hall, Robert 498
Halls Creek 435
Hampton, Ken 611
Hand, Gerry 45
Hardy, Frank 304
Harkness, B. C 271, 275
Harris, Mrs 526
Hartley Street School, Alice Springs 514
Hasluck, Paul 316–7, 346, 355–6, 365–6, 376, 399, 413–4, 427, 431–2, 437–9, 520
Hawke, Bob 43, 66, 69
Hawkesbury River 218
Heath, Sister Eileen 35, 474–5, 500, 513–6
Henderson, Gerard 289
Henry VIII 190
Herald Sun 49, 55, 323, 324
Herbert, Joyce 500
Hermannsburg Mission 476–7, 484, 490, 498, 505
Herron, John 16–7, 50, 615–6
High Court of Australia 23–4, 532–5
Hill, B. C. 547
Hill, Ernestine 370, 381, 397
Hill, Mrs 291, 293–4
Hill, Richard 131, 136, 193
Hiscocks, Ella 35, 89, 256, 262, 264, 267
Hitler, Adolf 52, 290
Hocking, Debra Anne, 553–4
Holding, Clive 45
Holland, Alison 401–2
Holloway, Edward (Jack) 394–5, 398
Hollows, Fred 238
Holman, W. A. 36, 129, 169
Holocaust, The 14–16, 51–4, 289–90
Home for Girls, East Perth, 407–8, 423
home-finders 84, 110, 267
hookworm 490
Hope Vale Mission 498
Horn Island 494
Horsington, Mr 240
Howard, J. P. 126
Howard, John 44, 49, 50, 51, 324, 330
Howitt, A. W. 215–6
Howson, Peter 16–17, 45
Hughes, Jean 299, 302–3
Human Rights Commission, previously Human Rights and

Equal Opportunity Commission 13–14, 25–6, 28, 32, 34, 36–8, 42, 45, 47–8, 50–2, 54, 71, 79, 81–2, 87, 97, 103, 130, 162, 184–5, 187, 212, 265–7, 278, 284, 287–8, 327, 361–3, 382, 386, 403, 420, 434, 438–9, 441, 481, 498–9, 502–3, 507, 510, 517, 521, 525, 539, 541, 544–6, 552, 554, 557–8, 560–1, 565–8, 610, 612, 616
Hundred Years War, A 66, 243
Hunter Valley 198
Hunter, Ernest 611, 612, 613, 614
Hyde, Miss 285

I Can Picture the Old Home So Clearly 71
If Everyone Cared 67, 292, 295–9, 303–4, 308
Illawarra 198
Illustrated My Place 311
Imparja Television 339
In the Way of His Steps, 258, 283
Indelible Stain?, An 343
individualism 467, 477–8
initiation ceremony 215
Institute for Aboriginal Development, Alice Springs, 556
International Criminal Court 45
International United soccer club 337
International Year of the World's Indigenous People, UN 480
Invasion to Embassy 32, 71, 78, 105–6, 125, 207–8, 210, 237–9
Inverell 121
Ipswich 555
Irving, David 52, 55
Isdell, James 447–52, 454–5
Ivanhoe 314

Jacobs, Pat 3, 7, 8, 32, 351, 356–9, 371, 377, 380, 382, 401–2, 413, 424, 428
Japanese invasion of Dutch East Indies and New Guinea 495
Jay Creek 483, 496, 524
Jenkins, Wendy 306
Jennifer 29, 265–8
Jigalong 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 296
Johnson, Darlene 68
Johnson, Les 45
Johnson, Vic 500
Jones, Jennifer 300, 303
Jopson, Debra 265–6, 272
Journal of Genocide Research 13, 14, 344, 365, 377

Kaberry, Phyllis 472
Kahlin Compound 479, 484–7, 499, 517, 533
Kalmykia, 14
Kalumburu Mision 444, 454, 459, 471, 474
Kamien, Max 25, 612–3
Katanning 356, 412
Katherine 359, 392, 494, 511
Keating, Paul 69, 70
Keene, Steve 401
Kempsey 133, 145
Kempsey Baths Case 260
Kempsey Municipal Council 260
Keneally, Thomas 204
Kennett, Jeff 560, 569
Kensington Park 334
Kiama 198
Kilburn Orphanage, London 426
Killoran, Patrick 555
Kimberley district 18, 29 349, 352, 357, 362, 374, 404–5, 407, 410, 422, 432–5, 440, 443–51, 453–5, 457–9, 461–2, 465, 470–1, 474, 611, child removals 448–51
Kinchela Aboriginal Boys' Home 28, 58–60, 128, 145, 150–1, 153, 155, 161, 170, 182–3, 188, 234, 244–50, 256–62, 271–3, 275–80, 282–3, 288
Kinchela Aboriginal School, 275, 297
Kinchela swimming pool 258–60

King, Philip Gidley 136–7, 156–7, 195, 215, 222, 230
King's Park 421
Kings in Grass Castles 307
Kingsmill, Arthur 188
Kitching, Harry 518, 523, 527–8
Kitson, W. H. 476
Klaatsch, Hermann 469
Knox, C. 512
Koolahr tribe 464
Koolmatrie, Wanda 69
Kruger v. Commonwealth 23, 47, 533, 534
Kruger, Alec 533–4
Kundrilba, Topsy 525, 526, 527
Kunmunya Mission 454, 457, 459, 460, 470
Kunoth-Monks, Rosalie 516, 529
Kyogle 126

La Grange Bay 440, 443, 445, 450
La Grange Feeding Depot 440
La Perouse Aboriginal Reserve 33, 87, 109, 122, 133, 198–9, 203, 209
La Trappe, order of 453
Lacey, R. 512
Lady Gowrie Rest Home 514
Lake Eildon, 303
Lake Tyers Settlement 563
Lake Victoria 215
Langton, Marcia 10, 11
Larrimah 497
Latham, John 391
Launceston 36, 541–3, 548
Laverton 462, 464, 471
Le Fanu, Bishop Henry 427, 514
League of Charity Home for Waifs and Stray Babies 426
League of Nations 462
Lebensborn, SS 53
Lefroy, Ruth 429
Lemkin, Raphael 53
Lennon, Paul 537, 538, 539, 552, 554
leprosariums 447
leprosy 490
Leslie, Father Kenneth 513, 524, 528
Lightning Ridge 117, 123
Link-Up 52, 55, 64, 66, 70, 79–81, 87, 97, 101–2, 212–3, 215, 253, 262, 271, 273, 284
Lismore 209
Little Bay 111, 122
Little Children are Sacred 237
Little Flower Mission, Artlunga 504
Little, Mr 565
Little, Prince F. 197
Liverpool 133
Lloyd, Gwenda 556
Lloyd, John 556
Lombadina Mission 454, 458–9
Long Bay reformatory 230
Long, Jeremy 523
Lost Children, The 66, 68, 78
Lost Generations, The 73, 331
Lotteries Commission, WA 429
Lousy Little Sixpence 67, 203, 253, 292, 298, 302–3, 308
Louth 133
Love, R. B. 470
Lovegrove, Creed 522, 523
Lucy from Queensland 233, 473
Luhrmann, Baz 2, 10, 11, 12, 68
Lutheran Church 484, 490, 505
Lyons, Joseph 37, 147, 63, 371, 389, 390, 391, 393, 494

MacDonald, Rowena 479–83, 532
Mackay, William 273
Mackett, P. J. 496, 508, 510
Macleay River 133, 145, 151, 201, 257, 272, 283
Macleod, Colin 521, 524–5, 528–30
Macquarie University 433
Macquarie, Lachlan 131, 223
Maddock, Kenneth 16, 64, 364
Magabala Books 69
Maisie 496, 530, 531
Making of the Aborigines, The 467
Makino, Uwe 13

Male Orphan School, Sydney 190
Mallett, Molly 36, 539, 543–6
Maloga Mission 131, 137, 141, 156–8, 195, 199, 219–20, 222, 230–2, 456, 473, 475
Maltese Sam 312–3, 316
Man From Snowy River 204
Manchester Guardian 462
Manchester United football club 337
Mandela, Nelson 321
Manne, Robert 54–5, 289, 292, 295, 344–5, 355, 362, 371, 377, 380, 385–6, 417, 422
Manning River 218
Mansell, Annette 539
Mansell, Michael 542
Mansfield, Gladys 418
Mao Tse Tung 290
Marble Bar 424
Mardu people 4–5
Marine Board, NSW 197
Maris, Hyllus 67
Markus, Andrw 63–4, 66, 71, 207, 467–8, 476–7
Marriage of Half-castes and Full Bloods 373
Marxists 51, 53
Mary Ann 443, 464
Mataranka 496
Matthews, Daniel 156–7, 199, 219, 230, 232–3, 456, 473
Matthews, Mrs 526
Mattingly, Christobel 611
Maynard, Fred 62
McArthur River 496
McArthur, Wally 336
McCarthy, Inspector 450
McEwen, John 371, 490, 495
McGowen, James 36
McGregor, Russell 345–6, 371, 377, 381, 383–4, 398–9, 417
McGuinness, P. P. 16, 55, 325, 384–6
McHugh, Justice Michael 24, 499, 535
McKell, William 36, 130, 183
McKendrick, Jane 613–4
McLeod, Dora 526–7
McMullan, Bob 330
McPhee, Jack 320
McQuiggan, A. J. 273–6, 279
Meagher, Douglas 556, 565
Meagher, Ray 557, 568
Melbourne Historical Journal, 41
Melbourne Writers' Festival 55
Melville Island 11, 373, 495, 496, 497, 501, 504, 505
Mendel, Gregor 380
Menindee Aboriginal Station 209
Merkel, Ron 70 517
Mervyn Smythe and Associates, 48–50
methylated spirits 222
Metropolitan Business College 337
MGM Pictures 261
Mildura 557
Mill, John Stuart 54
Milliken, Ted 523
Millingimbi Mission 484, 494, 505
Milosevic, Slobodan 45
Milroy, Gladys 308, 310–20
Milroy, Jill 320
Minister for Lands, NSW 200
Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, NSW 43, 55
Miss Junior Victoria quest 556
Mission Island 11
Missions, attitudes to Aboriginal sexual abuse 442–4, 461–6, 492, child removals to 457–61, connections with government 453–61, 484–5, dormitories 466–76, major accomplishments 476–8, motives of 490–2
Mitchell, E. C. 8, 404
Mittagong Children's Homes 84, 98, 100, 117
Moama 217, 219
Mogumber 357, 413
Molly 2–6, 8–9, 424
Montreal 132
Moola Bulla station 29, 362, 405, 408, 422, 432–40, great half-caste round-up 29, 432–9

Moomba Festival 556
Moonahcullah Aboriginal Station 67, 253, 292–3, 295–9
Moonggie 464
Moore River Settlement 3, 6–9, 22, 33, 256, 290–1, 353–5, 357, 361, 399, 402, 405–6, 408, 413–24, 429, 431, 436, 440–1, 465, 474, 513, boob 416–7, child removals to 417–23, sexual abuse 513–4, vocational training 413–7
Moore, Russell 68
Mooroopna 562, 565
Moral Rearmament 299, 302–4, 556
Moree 114, 119, 123, 209
Morell and Kemp, architects 256
Morgan, Alec 203
Morgan, Sally 29, 67–9, 292, 298, 304–21
Moriarty, John 336, 499–501
Moruya 132
Moseley, Henry, Royal Commission 326, 349, 354–5, 360–1, 375, 402–10, 413–8, 420–4, 433–7, 441, 444–5, 457–66, 473–4, 478
Mosely, Eileen 526
Moses, Dirk 15, 53
Mossgiel 132, 209, 218
Mossman 494
Mount Blatherskite 514, 516
Mount Margaret Mission 326, 440, 457, 459, 462, 465, 471, 474
Mount Wilson 499
Moy, Frank 518–9, 526, 531
Mulgoa 496–500, 514–5
Mulgoa Anglican mission 335
Munchebnerg, Eileen 337 340
Mungkari, Peter 326
Municipality of Canterbury 259
Munja Station 406, 408
Murra Munda Station 6
Murray River, 199, 219
Murundie 132
Museum of Sydney 106
Musgrave Ranges 518
My Colour Your Kind 68
My Own Sweet Time 69
My Place 68, 304–20

Nambucca River 217
Nannup, Alice 68
Napanangka, Eileen 531
Napurrula, Annie 532
Narrandera 233
National Aboriginal Consultative Council, 66
National Aboriginal Health Strategy report, 1989, 614
National Archives of Australia 68, 347, 370, 373–4, 386, 392–3, 396, 496, 501, 508, 510
National Library of Australia 433, 497
National Museum of Australia 281
National Tribal Council 34, 64–5
Native Administration Act, 1936 WA 348–9, 351, 353–4, 364, 375, 383, 398–9
Native Administration Act, WA 1936 408, 429 436, 461
Native Affairs Branch, NT 496–8, 511–2, 518–9, 522–4, 527, 529
Native Girls' Home, East Perth 361, 423
Native Title Tribunal 479, 532
Native Tribes of South-east Australia, The 215
Native Tribes of Western Australia, The 442–3, 464
Nazi death camps 265, 270
Nazi Germany 207, 344, 378
Nazi race atrocities 425
Nazis 13–16, 33, 42, 52, 290
Neglected children 91, 93, 95–6, 100, 108–9, 114
Neglected Children and Juvenile Offenders Act, NSW 1905 95
Nekes, Herman 469
Nelson, King John 215
Neutral Bay 298

Neville, A. O. 1–9, 11, 32–3, 35–6, 128, 317, 321, 344–6, 348–66, 369–83, 398–9, 401–38, 441, 447, 460–2, 465, 471, 476
New Norcia Mision 440, 458–60, 471
New South Wales State Archives, 56, 66, 73
Newcastle Waters 496, 514
Newington Hospital 121, 125
Newman, Joan 306
Nielsen, Niels 204
Noffs, Ted 337, 340
Noonamah 494
North Sydney 199
Northam 418
Northern Territory Health Department 237
Northern Territory Times 392
Not Slaves, Not Citizens 349, 352, 355, 359, 376, 447, 456–8, 460–1, 469–72
Notes on the Aborigines of New South Wales 131
Nowhere People 72, 78–9, 81, 344, 368, 377, 381
Nowland, P. 118
Nowra 21, 257
Noyce, Phil 1–2, 8, 68, 295
Nullagine 9
Nullah 10–12
number of Aboriginal children removed 609–18
Nunggubuyu people 339

O'Donoghue, Amy 322, 323
O'Donoghue, Eileen 322, 323
O'Donoghue, Geoffrey 322, 323
O'Donoghue, Lily 309, 322
O'Donoghue, Lowitja 29, 40, 249, 292, 321–31, 611
O'Donoghue, Tom 323, 326
O'Donoghue, Violet, 322–3
O'Loughlin, Justice Maurice 22, 23, 25, 28, 328, 505–7, 515–7, 519–20, 522–33
Oenpelli Mission 484, 504
Old Men's Home, Perth 403
Olsen, Christine 1, 4
Olympic Games, Sydney 332
Onslow 494
Onus, Bill 500
Oodnadatta 322, 323, 327, 457
opium smoking 218, 221
oral history 320, 328–30, 433–4
Original Australians, The 382
Ormond House 84, 250
Orphan Apprentices Act, 1834, 191
Osley 294
Otford 496, 499
Ottoman Empire, 13
Outcasts in White Australia 122–3
Oyster Cove 539

Padewani, Annie 308, 309
Page, Walter 34, 183
Pago Mission 454, 471
Pallottine monks 442, 449, 451, 453–5, 458, 460, 469, 470
Pan-Hellenic soccer club 337
Pardelup Prison 403
Parkerville Children's Home 310, 317–19, 408, 426–7, 429
Parkes, Henry 128, 129, 135, 136, 140, 180, 194, 239, 256
Parry, Naomi 540
Paterson, Banjo 204
Patrol in the Dreamtime 521, 525, 529–30
Patten, Jack 147–8
Payne, Ernest 149
Peardon, Annette 47, 552, 553
Pearl Harbor 495
pearling industry 443–6
Pearson, Karl 379
Pelican Island 113–14, 116, 142, 145
Penhall, Les 518, 525, 529
Penrith Chamber of Commerce 500
Penrith High School 500
Perez, Father Eugene 444, 459, 471, 474

Perkins, Charles, 29, 188, 249, 292, 331–41, 501
Perkins, Hetti 333, 334
Perkins, J. A. 37, 383, 385, 388 390–6, 494
Perth Hospital 424
Petermann Ranges 479
Petrov, Vladimir 303
Phillip Creek 512, 518, 525, 530–1
pianos in institutions 261
Pieman Henry 117
Pilbara district 319, 447
Pilkington, Doris 3–8
Pilliga Aboriginal Station 118, 211
Pine Creek 483, 533
Point Macleay settlement 63
Pol Pot 14
policy, concept of 346, 383–6
Polly 443, 450
polygamy 442, 463–4, 470
Pooncarie 132
Port George IV Mission 454
Port Hedland 494
Port Keats 479, 504
Pratt, Sister Ivy 231, 239
Pratten, Anne 67–8
Premiers' Conference 1933 391
Prichard, Katherine Susannah 307, 308, 359
Prince Henry Hospital 111, 122
Princess Lilardia 302
Princess of an Ancient Tribe, A 302
Prinsep, Henry 405, 411–2, 443, 446, 450, 460
prostitution 112, 114, 197, 199, 232, 234–5, 443–6, 476, 481, 486, 488–90, 498
Protestant Orphan School, Sydney 191, 245
public health 232, 236, 445–8, 490
Public Instruction Act, 1880, 134, 139, 192
Public Service Board, NSW 142, 148–50, 182–3, 192, 210–2, 275, 280
punishment and death at Cootamundra 265
Purga Mission 555
Purtell, Patrick 111

Quadrant magazine 44, 55, 64, 344, 361, 364, 384–5
Queen Salote 302
Queen's Park 318, 408, 428–9, 431
Quorn 322, 323, 328

Rabbit-Proof Fence 1–9, 68, 128, 256, 416–8, 422, 424
Race for a Place, A 378,382
Rainbow Town 334
Ramahyuck 467
Ramsland, John 180, 191–5
Randall, Bob 68, 81, 332
Randwick Asylum, 191, 193–4, 245
Rape of the Soul So Profound, A 60–1, 78, 128, 182
Read, Peter 29–35, 43–4, 51–2, 55–83, 87–8, 90–2, 97–9, 101–2, 105, 108–11, 114, 116, 118, 122, 125, 128–30, 140, 143, 152, 154–5, 162, 164, 166, 170–2, 179, 182, 184–7, 203, 212–15, 235, 240, 243–4, 249–51, 253, 258–62, 265–6, 268–78, 281–88, 291–92, 310, 331–39, 480–1, 510, 512, 517, 552, 610–1, 616
Reasons for children's removal, NSW: apprenticeship 119, 120, better conditions of living 94, 120, destitute 93, 100, 116, education or training 120, for being Aboriginal 93, 118, in moral danger, 96, 112, mother leading an immoral life 113, orphaned 89, 95, 96, 109, parents incapable of caring for child 117, parents' own request 120, poor or undesirable surroundings 93, 116,

uncontrollable 93, 98, 109, 114, without proper parental care and control 93, 96, 112
Reconciliation Australia 272
Reconciliation Convention 49
Reid, Jessie 285
Rein, Thérèse 86
Renwick, Arthur 194
Reputations of child welfare workers 35–8
Retta Dixon Home 28, 499, 503–12, 517–8, 521, 525, 530–1
Reynella SS 497
Reynolds, Henry 21, 55, 71–2, 78–81, 156, 343–4, 358, 368, 377, 381–2, 448, 451
Ricardo, David 426
Richards, M. 23
Richmond River 217
Riggs, Constable 9
Rintoul, Stuart 68, 323, 325–7
Risk, Bill 71
Roach, Archie 68
Roberts, Annette 500, 513–6, 525, 529
Roberts, Clancy 339
Roberts, Tom 204
Robertson, John 128–9, 135–6
Robeson, Paul 556
Robison, Hugh 136
Rodwell, Grant 378, 382
Roebourne 447
Roebuck Bay 447
Rollands Plains 141
Roper River Mission 339, 484, 491, 492, 504
Rose, George 273
Roseby Park Aboriginal Station 84, 117, 225
Ross, Bob 379
Roth Royal Commission into Aboriginal Conditions in Western Australia, 1904 445, 47, 453, 461
Rottnest Island 460
Roughsey, Elsie 68
Rowley, C. D. 122, 123, 283
Rowley, C. D. 78–81, 346, 371–2, 374–6
Royal Commission into Aboriginal Conditions in Western Australia (Roth) 1904 445
Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, 69, 249
Roya Commission to Investigate and Report on Matters in Relation to the Condition and Treatment of Aborigines in WA (Moseley) 1935 26, 349, 354–5, 360–1, 375, 402–10, 413–8, 420–4, 433–7, 441, 444–5, 457–66, 473–4, 478
Royal Commission into Public Charities, 1873 193
Rudd, Kevin 11–12, 22–3, 37, 39–41, 47, 293, 322, 348, 616
Runnymede Aboriginal Station 225
Ruskin, John 379
Rutter, Emmeline 29, 35, 110, 267, 286
Ryan, Bill 332
Ryan, Lyndall 540
Rydalmere mental hospital 125

Saltwater Fella 336
Salvation Army 562, 567
Salvation Army Settlement, Collie 450
Sandover River 516, 526
Savage, James 68
Save the Children Fund 547
SBS television, 292, 295, 401, 616
scabies 418
Scaddan, John 36
Schenk, Mysie 465
Schenk, R. S. 471
Schlink, Bernhard 16
Scott, Thomas 190
Scottish Enlightenment 381
sealers of Bass Strait 539
See, John 129, 181, 186

Segregation policy of J. W. Bleakley 371–98
Seiffert, Murray 491–2
Select Committee on the Condition of the Working Classes of the Metropolis, 1859 193
Sevington Aboriginal Station 112, 118, 144
sexual abuse and public health 445–8
sexual abuse of boys 445, 516–7
sexual abuse of girls 6–7, 112–4, 442–8, 461–6, 472–6, 488–90
Shankelton, Amelia 35, 512, 518, 530, 531, 532
Shark Island 201
Shaw, Bruce 432
Sheehan, Paul 16
Sheet Metal Workers' Union 500
Shit Skin 68
Shoalhaven District 218
Simms, Bruce 69
Simms, Herb 272
Singleton Home for Children 75, 84, 95–6, 117–8, 150–1, 161, 170, 244–7, 258, 279, 281–3, 288
Sister Kate 35, 317–9, 407–8, 424–32
Sister Kate's home for Aboriginal children 267
Sister Kate's Home, Queen's Park 407–8, 428–9, 431
Smith, Father Percy 35, 334–5, 500
Smith, G. C. 282
Smith, Isabel 334–5
Sobraon training ship 98, 100
Social Darwinism 358, 377, 380
socialist realist literature 301
Solomon, Alexander 183
Somerset 425
Sons in the Saddle 307
sorcery 475
South Australian Government submission to Human Rights Commission 616
South West Rocks 272, 275
South, C. 512
Soviet Union 16, 556
Spearritt, Peter 432, 433
Spencer, W. Baldwin 481, 486, 487
St Clair 258
St Francis House 335–6, 338–40, 497, 501
St Joan's Social and Political Alliance, UK 462
St John of God Convent and School 454, 458
St John's Hostel 514
St Mary's Church, Alice Springs 334
St Mary's Hostel 28, 33, 497, 503–5, 513–8, 521, 525–6, 528
St Michael's Convent, Kilburn 426
St Thomas's Church 498
Stalinist terror, 289–90, 300
Stanthorpe 123
State Archives of NSW 75–7, 82, 84–5, 89–90, 94, 96, 297
State Children's Council, NT 511, 515, 520
State Children's Relief Act, 1881, 138, 194
State Children's Relief Board of NSW 94–7, 102, 117, 151, 194–5
State Children's Relief Department 246, 279–80
Stewart, Corporal 450
Stitfold, Constance 402, 423
Stolen Generations of Aboriginal Children Act TAS 2006 537, 538, 539
Stolen Generations Victoria 569
Stolen Generations, Aboriginal activists' ignorance of 64–6, absence of evidence in archives 75–97, best-kept conspiracy in Australian history 34–5, estimates of NSW statistics 97–105, Holocaust analogy 51–5, impact of Peter Read's pamphlet 62–74, intellectuals' response 51-5, media response

48–51, number of children removed 25–7, 609–18, origins of myth 28–35, outcomes in courts 22–5, 571–5, Peter Read's creation of 55–62, why there were none 16–22, 616
Stolen Generations, The 16, 30, 31, 43, 55–6, 67, 75, 79, 80, 98, 114, 128–9, 167, 243–4, 249, 251, 258, 270–1, 278, 281–3, 288, 292, 295, 331
Stuart Highway 530
Stuart, Alexander 129, 135–6, 138–9
Sunday 310, 315, 318–9
Sunday Island 454, 458–9
Sunday Sunrise 272, 278
Supreme Court, South Australia 535
Swan Native and Half-Caste Home 450, 461
Swan Native and Half-Caste Mission 309, 316
swimming pool Kinchela 258–60
Sydney Harbour 197–8
Sydney Morning Herald, 265–6, 272–3, 289, 324–5, 328
Sydney Rescue Society 84
Sydney Water Police 197
syphilis 112, 228, 230, 232, 237

Take This Child 69, 499, 503, 512, 517, 530
Tally Ho 496
Tamworth Hospital 111
Tangentyere Town Council 339
Taree 133, 209, 218
Tasmanian Government Submission to the Human Rights Commission 544, 550, 551
Tatz, Colin 35, 554–7, 565–6
Taylor, Myrtle 293–4, 299
Teaching the Aborigines 471
Telegraph Station, Alice Springs 483
Tennant Creek 496, 530, 532
tennis courts, Cootamundra 260
Tent Embassy, Parliament House, Canberra 34, 64, 65
Tenterfield 217
Terry Hie Hie Aboriginal Station 84, 113
The Australian 49, 53, 55, 64, 69, 272, 277, 290, 293, 305, 324–5, 330
This Whispering in Our Hearts 358
Thomas, Eddie 553
Thomas, Faith 329
Thompson, Fred 392
Thornton, George 128, 130–1, 133–4, 135–7, 198, 216
Thwaites, Michael 303
Tickner, Robert 69–71, 249, 250, 321
Times Literary Supplement 51
Times, The London, 515
Tiwi people 492
Todd River drunks 339
Toohey, Justice John 534
Took the Children Away 68
Toomelah Aboriginal Station 111, 209
Torres, Abbott 456
Towera station 314
Townsville 494
trachoma 238–9
Trades and Labour Council of New South Wales 500
Trappist monks 454
Trevorrow, Bruce 23–4, 47, 575–92
Truganini 539
tuberculosis 110–11, 116, 122
Tucker, Margaret 29, 67, 253, 266, 280, 292, 292–309, 556
Tucker, Phil 300
Tuckett, F. W. 443, 445–6
Turkey Creek 435
Tweed River 217
Twist, Oliver 244

Ulupna Tribe 302
Umbakumba 505
Underwood, H. R. 460
Unemployment Relief Council 209
Union of Australian Women 186

United Aborigines Mission 58, 151, 244, 282, 323, 325–6, 328, 457, 459, 465
United Nations 14, 18, 24, 43, 45, 51, 70
United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide, 45
United Nations Year of Indigenous Peoples 1993 70
University of Newcastle 378, 382
University of Queensland 611
University of Sydney 15, 337
University of Victoria, Canada, 503
University of Western Australia 317, 319
Ure Smith 299, 303, 333
Uris, Leon 52
Urunga Aboriginal Station 84
Urunga Public School 228–30
USSR 207, 300
Utopia Station 516, 518, 524–6, 528–9

Vadiviloo, David 68
van Krieken, Robert 54
venereal disease 22, 27, 228–9, 231, 236, 238
Vernon training ship 100
Victorian Aboriginal Health Service 614
Victorian government submissions to Human Rights Commission 560
Victorian Socialist Party 379
Vincent, Ray 524
Viner, Ian 45
Violet Valley Station 405, 408, 435–6

Wace, Richard 445
Waifs Home, Parkerville 426
Wailing, The 68, 325
Walcha 108, 117–8
Walcott Inlet 434–5
Walden, Inara 80, 106, 173, 174, 178, 180, 241
Walgett 117, 123–5, 231
Walhalla 121
Walhallow 211
Walker, Dennis 34
Walker, Frank 186
Walker, Kath 301, 307
Wallaga Lake Aboriginal Station 116, 141–2, 158, 202, 211, 218, 224–5
Walmbi people 444
Walter, Father George 461, 469, 473
Wandering Girl 68
War Cabinet, Australia 495
Warangesda Aboriginal Station 58, 98–9, 115, 131, 137, 141, 147, 152, 156–8, 160, 201, 217–8, 222–5, 230, 233, 267, 281, 283, 283–8, 296, 472
Warangesda Girls' Training Home, 285–6, 288
Ward Registers, NSW 31, 75–126, 155, 180–1, 244–5, 247, 253, 266, 297
Ward, Glenys 68
Ward, Russel 204
Ware, Florrie 526
Warren 215, 218
Waterfall Sanatorium 110–11, 116, 252
Watson, Don 70
Wauchope 141
Wedge, Aileen 251, 269
Welfare Ordinance, NT 519, 524, 535
Wenberg family 89
Wentworth, Billy 45
Wessel Islands 373
West Australian 357, 359, 365, 415, 417–8, 426
Westerly 320
Wheeler, Fred 384
When the Pelican Laughed,68
White Australia policy 331
White Australia Policy, The 377
white foster care 182, 186
White, Bishop Gilbert 492, 495

Whitlam, Gough 43, 331, 337
Whittington, Vera 408, 426, 427, 428, 429, 431
Wild, Rex 237
Willcock, John 36
Williams, R. M. 327, 457
Willis, Eric 188
Wilson, Leslie 524, 526, 528
Wilson, Ronald 13, 16, 28, 42, 45, 48, 130, 162, 267, 271, 289, 342, 343, 345, 361, 379, 542, 565
Wilson, Tikka Jan 52
Wingham 133
Winnicom, Ray 272
Wiradjuri people 64, 73, 79
Wise, Bernhard 129
Wise, F. J. S. 518–9
Wodja 464
Wollar 142
Wollongong 198
Woman's Day,515
Women of the Sun 67, 295
Women's Service Guild 406, 410, 421, 462
Wongi Wongi 312–20
Woodburn 132
Woodland, A. T. 435
Woolbrook 115
Workers' Voice 300
work-for-the-dole 224
Worms, E. A. 469
Worora language 470
Worthy, Reginald 558, 567, 568
Wright, Mary 311
Wright, Tony 39
Wybalenna 541
Wyndham 494, 496

Yale University, 15
Yannarie station 314
Yarra Bank 300
Yirrkala Mission 505
Yougada 464
Yuendumu 524